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THE CAPUCHINS

VOLUME ONE

FRA MATTEO DA BASCIO

FATHER CUTHBERT, O.S.F.C.

THE CAPUCHINS

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF THE COUNTER-REFORMATION

VOLUME ONE

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PREFACE

This book can pretend to be nothing more than a first introduction to a neglected chapter in the history of the Catholic Reformation, commonly misnamed the Counter-Reformation. The word " Counter-Reformation " suggests that the internal reform of the Catholic Church was a counterblast to the Protestant Reformation. To some extent it was ; but not radically nor essentially. The internal reform of the Catholic Church began independently of the menace of Protestantism and undoubtedly would have developed and transformed the Catholic peoples even though Luther and Calvin had upheld the Papacy and Catholic Tradition instead of raising a revolution against both ; though as undoubtedly the Catholic reform movement would have progressed on more normal and, shall we say, more immediately progressive lines. One interesting point about the Capuchin Reform of the Franciscan Order is that it illustrates and indicates to those who have eyes to see, in one department of thought and conduct, something of what the normal development of the Catholic reform movement might have been if the menace of the Protestant revolt had not turned the Catholic world into an armed defensive camp. The Protestant revolt indeed affected the development of the Capuchin congregation, as it affected the whole world ; but essentially the life and thought of the Capuchins is derived not from the necessity of defending the Catholic Faith against heresy, but from the original Catholic reform movement itself in its revolt against the secularism and conventionalism which overwhelmed the declining medieval system. The early history of the Capuchins is a microcosm of the world-conflict within the Catholic Church in the first half of the sixteenth century, when the spiritual element was in revolt against the secularist element. Later in the intellectual development amongst the Capuchins we gain an insight into the strong Catholic humanist movement with which the earlier reform movement within the Church was

so intimately allied. An adequate definitive history of the Capuchin Reform will necessarily concern itself much with these wider problems in the history of the Catholic Reformation. But the definitive history of the Capuchins has yet to be written ; nor can it be written until the large mass of documentary evidence pigeon-holed in the archives and libraries of Europe has been adequately studied ; nor until the Capuchin writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have been given adequate attention.

I will not attempt to discuss the reason why modern historians have failed to deal in any way adequately with the part played by the Capuchins in the religious life of the Reformation period. They just have not studied it, despite the constant witness of contemporary writers to the powerful influence of the Capuchins in shaping the course of the Catholic Reformation.

If this book but draws the attention of scholars more competent than myself, to a fruitful field of research, it will have achieved its purpose—at least so far as the general public is concerned.

I cannot conclude this foreword without acknowledging my indebtedness to the late Père Edouard d'Alençon, in whom all future students of Capuchin history will gratefully acknowledge an inspiring leader. And to others, too, whose names appear in the course of this book and without whose labours it could not have been written, I tender a gratefu acknowledgment.

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PART I

ORIGIN AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE CAPUCHIN REFORM

CHAPTER I

THE CALL OF FRA MATTEO

(i)

It was in the first days of the new year, 1525,[1] that Fra Matteo da Bascio of the order of the Franciscan Observants set out from the friary of Montefalcone, near Fermo in the Marches of Ancona, with the purpose of seeking an audience of the Holy Father, Clement VII, in the city of Rome. Matteo was young, not more than thirty years of age.[2] He had the robustness of the healthy peasant whose forebears had been innured to hard labour in the fields, and that natural refinement of character sometimes found amongst those who have tilled the soil they live upon, a spiritual quality gained in intimate communion with Nature's mysteries. But Matteo from his earliest years had looked forward to the day when he might enter into the service of God in some religious order and even become a priest. For that reason he had been anxious to learn such book-knowledge as would be necessary to gain him admission amongst the candidates for the priestly office. It was not much time he could find for books, for his father insisted that he must do his share of work in the fields, yet at length before he reached his full manhood he had learned enough to gain him admittance as a cleric-novice amongst the Franciscans. In time he took his vows and then went through the course of study demanded of the aspirant to the priesthood. He was never any great hand at book-learning, but he loved the Sacred Scriptures; and whilst others of his fellow students discussed them he silently delved into them for the sake of the spiritual lore his soul thirsted for. They were to him his

[1] Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, *Cronica* I, p. 122; so also Mario da Mercato-Seraceno, *Narratione dell' origine dell' congregatione de' Frati Capuccini*, cart. 49. Boverius following later writers gives the date as 1524.

[2] Mario (cart. 47) says: "*nacque circa l'anno* 1495."

book of meditation, from which he fed his mind and heart in his yearning to know more of God and God's ways with man. A somewhat lone and dumb figure he cut in the schoolroom ; yet all the while he was becoming more and more aware of a vivid life in which he perceived the face of God. When his course of study was finished and he was ordained priest, his soul, hitherto mute save in the inner life of the spirit, now found a new expression in his preaching. If he could not speak in the schoolroom his words flowed simply but passionately as he stood in the presence of men whose souls he was eager to bring to the knowledge and love of God which he himself had gained. Especially was he drawn to the country folk and the hard-working poor whom he understood so well : and they on their part appreciated the rugged simplicity of Matteo. But Matteo was no mere preacher of the Word ; he was at the same time a doer, ever ready to give service to his fellow men in deeds of mercy, even as he gave service to God in deeds of worship. Very soon he gained reputation as the friend and servant of any who were in need of spiritual or temporal comfort. He had a large heart and understanding sympathy for all human needs, this shy and silent young friar ; as was shown in heroic measure when the plague came upon and devastated the city of Camerino in the year 1523. No sooner did news of the outbreak come to the friar in his friary at Montefalcone than he set out for Camerino and there gave unstinted service to the plague-stricken people. Through the long months Matteo remained staunchly at his elected post, administering the sacraments and assisting the dying with words of comfort ; nursing those who had none to nurse them and questing for food and bodily comforts for those in need ; so that the stricken people had come to see in him an angel sent by heaven for their comfort in their distress. Then when the need was over he had quietly quitted the city, shunning the praise of the citizens as they would shun the plague : for by now all in the city were loud in his praise, from the Duke and Duchess to the lowliest beggar.

Yet all was not well with Matteo ; in his heart there was a growing discontent. Plainly the case was this. For some years now Matteo had been living as well as he might the life of a Franciscan friar ; but it had begun to dawn on him

that the life of a Franciscan friar in these days was not as it had been in the beginning when St. Francis and his early disciples lived by the rule of most high poverty, walking by faith rather than by human prudence : and in his heart Matteo felt himself in some sort a disloyal follower of the Rule he had vowed to observe. Not that he had ever wilfully transgressed its precepts ; but that in the circumstances in which he found himself, his life did not respond to the pure ideal of life on which St. Francis had based his Rule and in accordance with which he had intended the Rule to be observed. When he had entered the Order he had unquestionably taken for granted that the actual life was a true interpretation of the mind of its Seraphic Founder. But as time went on Matteo had learned many things. He had learned, for instance, that the life as now lived was not altogether such as it had been lived in the first days of the Observant Reform and still less as it was traditionally held to have been lived in the days of St. Francis. There still lingered amongst the brethren in the Marches of Ancona a very vivid tradition of the early Franciscan days which for long had been handed down by those " Spiritual " brethren (as they were styled) who were the forerunners of the Observants. Fra Matteo in his silent way drank in the tales of former days and compared his life with that of the brethren whose glories still cast a halo around the Franciscan name. Their lives gave vigour and splendour to the written Rule. Yet the more he learned the more he grew uneasy.

His superiors, recognising his simple fervour, were tolerant and appreciative as his discontent showed itself in endeavours to achieve a greater personal conformity with the ideal life. Some of them and in particular the Minister Provincial, Giovanni da Fano, were themselves apprehensive of the growing spirit of relaxation and were working towards a renewal of the former austerity. But there were limits to their accommodation. They could not forgo the authorised relaxation upon which the actual system, in part at least, rested. Clearly the friaries of to-day with their larger communities needed a more secure provision for their maintenance than did the primitive small communities ; and if a greater ease and comfort were tolerated, Matteo was reminded that such mitigations as were allowed were a wise

provision for the weaker brethren : heroic austerity is for the few ; a reasonable moderation for the many. All which line of argument perplexed but did not convince the simple mind of Matteo with its persistent vision of the life that had been in the days when the friar lived by faith and not by the prudence of the world.

Then came a day when the perplexities of his mind were brought to a clear judgment. The brethren of Montefalcone had attended a funeral at some distance from the friary. They were returning home, Matteo following in the rear, when they came across a beggar lying by the wayside, starved with the cold and almost naked. The friars pressing on ahead, anxious for their mid-day meal, passed by the beggar unheeding ; but Matteo coming up, stopped, knelt by the beggar with comforting words, and taking off his cloak, wrapped the beggar in it. Then only when he had attended to the starved beggar, did Matteo follow after the brethren. Arrived at the friary, the comfort of the mid-day meal smote the heart of Matteo as he thought of the beggar. Here was he, a professed follower of most high poverty, with a house to shelter him and a good meal to sustain him and warm clothing to protect him against the cold, whilst outside the friary were others ill-clad and starving and without a roof to shelter them. Could he rightly call himself the poorest of the poor as St. Francis, according to the legend, had himself wished to be and as he said his friars ought to be ? Was most high poverty observed in the friary or outside it ? Surely, it seemed to him, the starved beggar by the wayside had the greater right to call himself a follower of the poverty St. Francis loved. In his distress Matteo betook himself to prayer, praying for light and guidance in the trouble in which he found himself. He was thus praying when within his spirit he heard a voice which thrice bade him " observe the Rule to the letter." It was the answer to his prayer : he was no longer perplexed ; for him at least the way was clear ; his duty was to observe the Rule he had vowed as St. Francis wished it to be observed " to the letter" and without gloss, that is without moderating interpretations.[3]

[3] *Chronica Fr. Joannis Romaei de Terra Nova*, in *Anal. Ord. Cap.* vol. xxiii. Bernardino da Colpetrazzo loc. cit. ; Mario da Mercato-Seraceno : *Epistola ad P. Honorium*, in *Anal. Ord. Cap.* vol. xxiii, p. 273 *seq.*

About this time Matteo was one day talking with an old friar about the Rule and how it was observed in the days of St. Francis, when the old friar told him that even the habit he wore was not as the habit worn by the Saint and his first followers. The primitive habit, he was told, was of coarser texture than that now in use : moreover, it was shaped differently, the hood being four-cornered, not round, and sewn to the gown.[4] Matteo was now in that state of mind which pleads for some outward witness of an inward loyalty. He therefore sought out a coarse gown and made himself a hood of the shape described and sewed it to the gown : and this he put on in place of the habit he had hitherto worn, in spite of the criticism and protests of the other members of the community. He had no wish to offend them, but he must be loyal to the voice which had called to him. Quickly he perceived that he must choose between the community and the duty which his conscience and the voice had made so clear. He had no intention of cutting himself adrift from the obedience he owed his superiors : yet in his present quandary he knew he could hope neither for approval nor assistance from his immediate superiors nor from the brethren at large. If he must act, he must act on his own responsibility : yet what of obedience without which no blessing of God would be with him ? Then it was that it came to him that he must seek the highest superior of all, the Pope himself, to whose judgment he would submit himself. In his simple faith he felt that the Pope would listen to him, for was not the Pope the father of all, Christ's Vicar on earth ? Thus thinking no wrong but urged by a true obedience to God and His Vicar, Matteo one night when the brethren had retired to rest quietly left the friary, knowing that if he were seen and questioned he would be forcibly detained. He was well on his way to Rome before his absence was discovered.[5]

[4] Unknown to Matteo, a reformed congregation of Observants in Spain, known as the " Discalced Observants," and also as " Capuciati," had already adopted the same form of habit. cf. Wadding, *anno* 1496, XV. St. Peter of Alcantara at a later period was a member of this congregation. The Leonine Bull of Union in 1517 ordered them to conform to the form of habit in use amongst the Observants generally, but as late as the seventeenth century some of the French Recollects still wore what would now be called the Capuchin habit.

[5] " *Si parti senza far motto ad alcuno,*" says Mario ; and Bernardino da Colpetrazzo : " *Con gran silentio del convento di Montefalcone si parti.*"

So here we have Matteo hurrying forward to beg the Pope's sanction and blessing for his desired freedom to live as St. Francis and his first followers lived. Yet at this moment Matteo according to the letter of the law is in the canonical or uncanonical position of a fugitive from the obedience he owes his superiors : technically, at least, an apostate. But a starving man may take his neighbour's bread against his neighbour's will without being guilty of theft, and when a soul is being strangled the laws which hinder that soul from obtaining spiritual freedom no longer hold. Matteo, though no casuist, goes forward guiltless in his own conscience ; for the rest he has a firm belief that the Pope will set all things right. And after all he was not the first friar who, unable to accept with a quiet conscience the relaxation of the Rule he had vowed, had broken away from the common life ; and not a few who had thus broken away had been blessed and protected by the Popes.

(ii)

To understand Matteo it must be borne in mind that he came of that race of visionary realists who live by an ideal and whose souls starve when the freedom to pursue the ideal with an active service is taken from them. Of such had been that long line of friars who from the time of St. Francis had stood out against the relaxation of the most high poverty worshipped by the Saint and his first companions, and against the tendency to substitute a strictly legal interpretation for the soaring aspiration after the ideal which had been the impelling force of the early Franciscan days. And whilst Matteo is pursuing his path to Rome let us glance back at his spiritual lineage.

Even in the days of St. Francis a sharp division of opinion had shown itself amongst his followers. To neither party—for very soon the Order had been divided into two opposing parties—was the letter of the Rule the final law. To the one party—that which in time came to be known as " the party of the Community "—the mere letter was an impossible law save as it was accommodated to the changing external circumstances of an Order which had outgrown the primitive

conditions of its birth and which found itself called upon, both by the ambitions of many of its members and by the demands of the world at large, to extend its activities beyond the sphere originally contemplated. And in this accommodation the new external activities were oftentimes more thought of than the ideal of life in which the Order had been founded. The ideal was sacrificed to the exigencies of external activities and new circumstances ; and a legal interpretation was sought which regulated the accommodation and at times permitted what were frankly relaxations. The opposing party—who became known as the " Spirituals "—had too their interpretation of the letter of the Rule ; but their interpretation was based on the practice of St. Francis himself and those who claimed to know his mind, the companions who had lived in close intimacy with him and had stood with him in his bitter contention with those who had sought even in his own lifetime to mitigate the Rule of Poverty. With the " Spirituals " the Rule as lived by St. Francis must stand unchanged amidst changing circumstances. As opposed to " the Community " which held that the Rule was a legal document to be interpreted by the legists, the " Spirituals " held that the Rule was a God-given charter of freedom to observe the Gospel in its every commandment and counsel, and that any legal interpretation which destroyed the freedom and simplicity of the Rule as St. Francis intended it to be observed, was a betrayal of a trust and a departure from the true Franciscan life. Throughout the long controversy which divided the party of relaxation as it was sometimes called, and the party of the pure observance, this was the main dividing line. There was indeed a third body between the two great contending forces : men who though belonging to one camp or the other, had wider sympathies. Thus amongst the friars of " the Community " were not a few who whilst accepting the " milder " interpretations and the modifications of the primitive simplicity, yet endeavoured to restrict the more manifest relaxations of the Rule and to live at least in the spirit of the primitive fraternity so far as their personal life was concerned. And amongst the " Spirituals " too there were those who admitted that in the changing circumstances of the Order there must be a certain adaptability to new needs, provided that the essential poverty and

simplicity of the Rule were maintained as the foundation of the fabric. These were the moderates of both sides. They could hardly be said to form a party : they were as a leaven preventing for a long time the utter disunion of the Order. The great disaster for the Franciscan fraternity was the emergence of Brother Elias as the master-organiser of the fraternity at the time when the yet fluid society of the brethren needed a wise manipulation to set it in the way of an organised development which would be at once true to the original ideals and capable of assimilating new conditions and ideas without loss of the original spirit. Elias was heart and soul of " the Community " (to anticipate the use of the party name later in vogue) ; but he was of " the Community " in some of its least Franciscan traits. As an organiser he had great abilities : he fell short of genius. A genius would have developed the fraternity in accordance with its own peculiar ideals and fundamental spirit. Elias sought to develop the Order in emulation of that most perfect of medieval organisations—the Order of St. Dominic. He would build up a Franciscan counterpart of the rival Order ; for to Elias the Dominicans were a rival Order. That was his great mistake and the cause of his great failure. He did go far towards building up a rival organisation to that of the Dominicans, but at the cost of much that was most significant and inspiring in the original Franciscan life. Elias fell before the uprising of the brethren ; but his work was not to be easily undone. After all he was but one amongst many ; and even amongst those who rose up against him, many did so mainly because of his harsh imperiousness, which made his government a burden to those under him. And neither of his immediate successors was gifted with the statesmanship and imaginative foresight which even yet might have secured the Order against the divisions which were to come. They too were lured by the Dominican organisation. As we look back upon the history of the Order we can see that a rigid uniformity was the last thing to conserve unity in an Order so governed by idealism as the Franciscan fraternity. As with the Benedictine family so with the Franciscan, the first and essential aim is to *be* rather than to *do*. In that both the Benedictine and the Franciscan differ from those Orders which are

founded primarily, as was the Dominican, for an external apostolate. The Franciscan fraternity, it is true, included an active service for others in its vocation ; but this active service flowed from its ideal of the Gospel-life on which its life was to be formed : its fundamental purpose was to revive primarily amongst its own members a perfect Christ-life as portrayed in the Gospel. In such a life there must be not only a wide liberty of the spirit but also the means to express that liberty in the various manifestations it must take amongst a large multitude of men. Such an Order would need an organisation which whilst securing an essential worship of the common ideal would yet leave room for corporate as well as individual varying expressions of the common life. A federation of communities all inspired by the same fundamental purpose and ideal and united in a supreme common loyalty, yet free within the common bond to express and develop their own conceptions of the governing ideal, such it would seem should have been the basis of the Franciscan organisation. At a later period in its history some attempt at such a system was made, but only half-heartedly and without the entire consent of the predominant partners : the Dominican tradition (as we may call it) was too strongly entrenched to allow of such a complete and radical reorganisation as alone would have made the more decentralised system successful. Moreover, at the period when the trial was made, party feeling was already too strong to secure that mutual and general good will without which a decentralised system becomes a failure.

Thus almost at the outstart of Franciscan history a cross purpose was introduced into the Order which was never exorcised. It showed itself in the growing tendency to build large convents and churches in rivalry with the Dominicans; and in the introduction of a more ceremonious ordering of the community life after the manner of Canons-regular, and still more in the growing substitution of external observances for the simpler law of the spirit by which St. Francis and his first friars lived. With all this went a necessary relaxation of that most high poverty in which the freedom of the Franciscan spirit found its inspiration and security. To those of the brethren who cherished the tradition of the primitive Franciscan life especially in the Italian provinces

consecrated by the personal work of St. Francis himself and by that of his immediate disciples, this new development seemed little else than an apostasy from the Franciscan Rule. Elias in his arrogant way dealt hardly with these zealots for the primitive tradition ; but his very persecution only tended to create amongst them a more intense feeling of distrust and opposition towards the new developments. Many of the Italian brethren fled to the fastnesses of the Apennines and sought freedom to live as St. Francis lived, in humble friaries or hermitages far removed from the highways of the world. Here they kept alive a vivid memory of the primitive life of the Order and jealously conserved all records left by those who knew St. Francis and could witness to the life he led and intended the brethren to lead. To them we owe in fact many of the most authentic records of St. Francis and the first Franciscan days. It is not to be wondered at that in their seclusion from the wider life of the world, some of these zealous adherents of the primitive life came in time to have an undiscerning suspicion and a fierce resentment against any innovation, however justified by practical necessity ; or that their zeal for the purity of the Rule degenerated into an almost fanatical opposition to whatever was not explicitly contained in the earliest Franciscan forms. Thus towards the end of the thirteenth century it came about that the Order legally uniform, was in reality far from uniform either in external observance or in sentiment. What was now known as " the party of the Community " was divided between those who recklessly accepted relaxations with little regard to the intention of St. Francis, and others who accepted " milder " interpretations and relaxations with reluctance as in some sort an evil necessity. So too amongst the zealots there were those who stood for the primitive tradition with a reasonableness and charity which in no wise made them less staunch to the tradition ; whilst there were others whom opposition drove into a self-opinionated and loveless fanaticism. Thus the Order became more and more divided in feeling and practice and to many it seemed but a welter of contending opinions. Yet amidst the confusion which ensued there was amongst many on both sides a sincere feeling for the Franciscan life, divorced from party rancour and the unreasonableness of

the fanatics. This feeling showed itself in a growing recognition that within the Franciscan organisation there must be room for a "mitigated" observance and a "stricter" observance: that those who so desired should be free to embrace the more primitive form of life according to the practice of the first days of the Order, whilst others might lawfully accept a milder interpretation of the Rule and yet not cease to be true sons of St. Francis. Such was the conviction of Blessed Giovanni Valle and Blessed Paoluccio di Trinci, who about the middle of the fourteenth century initiated the Reform of the Strict Observance. Giovanni had been trained in the Franciscan life by the "Spiritual" leader, Angelo Clareno, and Paoluccio was Giovanni's disciple. At a moment when the "Spiritual" party, owing to the fanaticism of a large section, seemed about to dissolve,[6] Giovanni Valle applied to the Minister General Odo for permission to found a hermitage for himself and four companions at Brugliano on the borders of Umbria, which overlooks the Marches of Ancona. Odo, himself of the party of "the Community," willingly acceded to their request, and at Brugliano, as has been said, the glories of Rivo Torto and the Porziuncola were renewed and the Lady Poverty came again into her own. Giovanni's disciples increased, but shortly after his death, in 1351, some of them, under Gentile da Spoleto, sought exemption from the jurisdiction of the Superiors of the Order. A storm of indignation was thereby aroused amongst the friars of "the Community." Gentile's hermits were disbanded and for a time it seemed that Giovanni Valle's reform was at an end. Then it was that Fra Paoluccio had come forward and saved the movement. With the Minister General's permission he repeopled the hermitage of Brugliano and shortly afterwards, as disciples came to him, he established hermitages in other places where the primitive Franciscan life was observed in all its purity. Under Paoluccio's government the Observant Reform grew rapidly and was favoured and protected by

[6] Several small communities of Spirituals who looked to Angelo Clareno as their guide continued to maintain an independent existence until 1562, when they were suppressed by Pius V. They had long ceased at the time of their suppression to maintain their original ideals. cf. Letter of Caterina Cibo, Duchess of Camerino, in P. Edouard d'Alençon: *I Primi Conventi dei Capuccini* Appendix; and *De Primordiis*, p. 61. They were known as Clareni.

the Superiors of the Order ; whilst his relations with the friars of the Community generally were marked by a mutual charity ; so much so that in 1388 the Minister General Alfieri appointed Paoluccio his commissary, to govern in his name the hermitages of the Reform in Umbria and the Marches of Ancona, with power to send his friars to any part of Italy, Corsica and Bosnia. It was a statesmanlike solution of the difficulty, requiring it is true a mutual goodwill and liberal charity for its smooth working ; and for a time at least in Italy all went well, and the Observants and Conventuals—as the parties were now to be styled—lived side by side in fraternal amity ; as a mark of which in 1415 the Conventuals voluntarily ceded to the Observants the sacred chapel of the Porziuncola. Meanwhile, however, a reform movement, similar to that which had taken place in Italy, had spread to France. Here the relations between the Conventuals and the Reform were less happy. At the Council of Constance in 1415 the Observants of France, Burgundy and Lorraine were practically separated from the jurisdiction of the Conventuals, being allowed to choose their own Vicars, who owed but a nominal subjection to the Conventual Superiors : and thus began the juridical division of the Order. And now two events happened which tended to strengthen the Reform in Italy : one was the election of Pope Martin V, who greatly favoured the Reform, the other the appearance of San Bernardino of Siena, the most popular preacher of his time in the Italian peninsula. He had joined the Observants in 1402 in the hermitage of Il Colombaio, at that time governed by the Blessed Giovanni da Stroncone, a disciple of the Blessed Paoluccio. Bernardino's magnetic personality and wonderful holiness were undoubtedly the chief factor in the now rapid spread of the Reform. At the time of his death in 1444 the Reform numbered more than four thousand friars in Italy alone ; and beyond the Alps, particularly in France, it was growing daily in strength. In vigour and influence it was now the predominant partner in the Franciscan Order : for as the Observants waxed strong the Conventuals declined ; all the more vigorous vocations went to the Observants and in spite of repeated efforts to bring about a Reform within the Conventual body which might tend to unite the two bodies and

maintain the substantial unity of the Order, the Conventuals, owing to a succession of weak Ministers General, more and more lost ground both in the estimation of the people and in spiritual vigour : most of their energies indeed were wasted in violent denunciations of the successful Observants and in intrigues to circumvent their increasing influence. The final triumph of the Observants came in 1517 when Pope Leo X gave them the headship of the Order—reversing the law by which the Observants owed a nominal subjection to the Conventuals, and now placing the Conventuals under a nominal subjection to the Observants.

Meanwhile, however, the Observants themselves had paid the price of that popularity which swelled their ranks. With the spread of the Reform, the Observants no longer confined themselves to the hermitages or small houses such as had been the nurseries of the movement, and by the end of the fifteenth century they had already begun to rival the Conventuals in the magnitude of their buildings. The large Observant communities at once found themselves in the same difficulties as regards the law of poverty as that which confronted the larger Franciscan houses in the thirteenth century. The simple provision which sufficed for the hermitage of Brugliano was inadequate for the feeding and clothing of the friars in a commodious city friary. Once again the larger friaries became the centres of a relaxation of that strict poverty such as Paoluccio had striven for : and once again the simple life of the hermitage gave place to the more ceremonious and formal life of the conventual type. Undoubtedly, even in the larger Observant communities, a stricter poverty prevailed than in the Conventual houses, and a more spiritual atmosphere. The influence of the heroic sanctity of San Bernardino and of numerous saints who had cast a halo of holiness around the Observant Reform still worked to leaven the Observant family. Nevertheless, as a body the Observants had already succumbed to the same secular influences which had brought about the original decline from the pure Franciscan ideal. Yet the decline was not allowed to proceed without vigorous protest, and in several of the Observant provinces the growing relaxation was met by a strenuous effort on the part of the minority to revive a stricter observance : especially in Spain where

at the end of the fifteenth century with the approval of the Observant Superiors the brethren who aspired to a more austere life were encouraged to segregate themselves in hermitages or "houses of recollection" under Superiors appointed by the Ministers Provincial. Still for the most part the growing agitation for reform, more particularly in Italy, met with a violent opposition on the part of the Observant community, so that even the Observant Ministers General who were favourable to reform found themselves unable to effect it. Not until a later period, when the Observant Congregation had been shaken to its very foundations by the agitation for reform, was the question of internal reform seriously taken in hand : and by that time the most vital element in the reform movement had been driven to form itself into a congregation distinct from the Observants.

(iii)

Matteo da Bascio, then, was not singular in his desire for a stricter observance of the Rule ; nor was he alone at this very time in his discontent with the changed spirit of the Observants amongst whom he lived, except in one point ; but that was of cardinal importance as events were to show. In men's lives it is often the intangible things which count most in the shaping of their destiny ; and with Matteo da Bascio it was his strong individualism of character and temperament—that individualism which in its unselfishness and simplicity gives charm to the pages of the *Fioretti di San Francesco*, and which more than anything else made the organisation of the Order so difficult a problem when it came to embodying the Franciscan life in a legal constitution. To Matteo da Bascio his fidelity to the Rule and the spirit in which it was written, was directly a personal duty: he must be faithful to the Rule if he would be true to his own soul, no matter what opinions others held concerning it. When he set out from Montefalcone he had no thought of reforming the Order : he merely wanted to set himself right both in the letter and in the spirit with the Rule he had vowed to observe. He would gladly have done this within the community if he could ; but if he could not, then must

he look to himself apart from the community—though as a good Catholic he would submit himself to the judgment of Christ's Vicar on earth. Unconsciously to himself he was in his action formulating a principle which a few years later was to bring bitter strife into the Franciscan Order—the principle that the Rule is above the Order and that the Order exists only to effect the full observance of the Rule : a dangerous principle doubtless in the hands of any but the pure lovers of the Rule ; yet of its truth no Catholic can doubt, since, as we shall see, Christ's Vicar when appealed to, upheld it. Implicitly all the reformers appealed to it : but Matteo da Bascio in his utter simplicity set it as a naked light upon a candlestick, and in so doing, accomplished more than he set out to accomplish on that fugitive journey to Rome. But all this will be told in its proper place. For the moment we are concerned with Matteo.

Matteo at length reached Rome, though not without adventures on the way. At one place he fell in with a party of his Observant brethren, and with difficulty escaped detention as a fugitive. And a strange figure he must have felt himself amidst the medley of paganism and Christian worship which met him in the great City of Christendom. True, it was the Jubilee year when he arrived there ; and Clement VII had seen to it that the pulpits in the churches should be filled with " preachers of approved life " brought from outside Rome ; and the streets would resound to the chants of the pilgrims as they went their round of the churches to gain the great indulgence. But behind all this was the glittering background of the Rome of the Renaissance, pleasure-loving and gay, at heart godless and utterly selfish ; little reckoning that within a short three years the city would be a heap of ruins and her sinful gaiety changed to horror and mourning. If on his appearance in the streets, Matteo's rude and novel garb drew attention to him, some might perhaps hazard an opinion that he was another of those self-appointed prophets who of late had descended on the city to denounce its wickedness. But the Romans were tolerant : after all, a denouncing prophet was not an unpicturesque figure in the merry-go-round which the Romans called life. But Matteo had not come to denounce or preach, much as his heart yearned that all men should

renounce sin and love God. His apostolate was not here in this splendid city which bewildered him. Swiftly as might be he would return to his own province, whose people he loved and understood. He had braved the journey to Rome in winter and through a land devastated by war, for no other reason than to ease his own conscience and gain the liberty to live according to what he conceived to be the mind and intention of Saint Francis whose follower he had vowed to be.

According to the story told by one who knew him,[7] Matteo on entering Rome went at once to the church of St. Peter to pray at the tomb of the Apostles : and there on the steps leading into the church Providence met him and took him as it were by the hand. For as he was mounting the steps a man accosted him and asked his purpose in coming to Rome. Learning that Matteo wished to see the Pope, the man bade him go to the Vatican on the following morning and enter in and he would undoubtedly meet His Holiness. Matteo followed the injunction and came face to face with the Pope in one of the Vatican corridors. At first the Pope was annoyed as Matteo unceremoniously cast himself at the Pontiff's feet and begged an audience ; but the simple earnestness of the friar constrained Pope Clement to listen patiently. " Holy Father," Matteo pleaded, " you know that in these times the Rule of St. Francis is not generally observed, and I desire to observe it to the letter : and I humbly pray you to allow me to wear this habit as worn by our father St. Francis, and to observe the Rule to the letter as he gave it. But our fathers will not wish that I wear this habit in their company. I pray, therefore, that it may please you to permit me to go about the world preaching the commandments of God, and by example and word according to my simplicity, exhorting all men to walk in the way of God and in good works."[8] " That you may observe the Rule to the letter as you desire," the Pope replied, " We

[7] Mario da Mercato-Seraceno : *Delle Origini dei Frati Minori Cappuccini Descrizione Seconda*, edit. P. Giuseppe da Fermo (Ancona 1927), p. 9 ; and the same chronicler's *Narratione*, MS. cit. cart. 53.

[8] Thus Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, I, p. 131, and Mario da Mercato-Seraceno, cart. 54. Later writers add that Matteo requested permission to live an eremitical life, which, however, seems unlikely in view of Matteo's later story.

grant you all you ask of Us ; only in token of obedience you must every year at the time of the Chapter present yourself to your Minister Provincial." Matteo was about to retire when the Pope added that if he came again the following day a written document would be given him to attest the verbal concession. Thereupon Matteo returned to the church of St. Peter to await the morrow in prayer. At nightfall he ensconced himself in a pulpit and there slept awhile before renewing his vigil.[9] But in the early morning he went forth intending to go to the Vatican for the promised letter : he was anxious to return to his own land without delay. On the steps of the church, however, he met the friend who had seemed to him God's Providence. " Do not be solicitous about the letter," said the friend. " The Pope's word is sufficient for your conscience. For the rest leave the matter in the hands of God." Matteo accepted the advice and without calling at the Vatican straightway left Rome on his homeward journey. Perhaps at the moment he recalled how St. Francis had bidden his friars seek no letters of protection from the Roman Court, but cast themselves wholly on the care of God.

By Matteo, and the chronicler to whom he related the event, the happy granting of his petition was attributed to the merciful intervention of God's Providence : and rightly so. But Divine Providence commonly works through human agency : and in this case it is not improbable that Caterina Cibo, Duchess of Camerino and niece of His Holiness, had something to do with the Pope's readiness to grant the petition. Not improbably the friend who met Matteo at St. Peter's was her messenger. For the Duchess Caterina was at this time in Rome ; and that she had not forgotten Matteo's services to the sick of Camerino becomes evident later on.[10]

Matteo on his return took the road which goes by Assisi, for he wished once again to renew his vows at the tomb of

[9] Mario da Mercato-Seraceno, *Narratione*, cart. 54 ; *Descrizione*, loc. cit. p. 9 *seq.*

[10] According to B. Feliciangeli (*Notizie e documenti sulla vita di Caterina Cibo-Varani* (*Camerino*, 1891), the duchess went to Rome in October, 1524, and was there till the spring of the following year. Her letter to Giovanni da Fano (cf. *infra*, p. 8) suggests that she knew of the Pope's concession from personal knowledge—cf. P. Giuseppe da Monte Rotondo : *Gl' Inizi dell Ordine Cappuccino* (Roma, 1910), p. 13 *nota*.

the Saint he would follow so loyally. At Foligno, where he broke his journey before reaching Assisi, to his great joy he was shown an ancient medallion of St. Francis represented in a habit similar to that he himself now wore. When he had refreshed his spirit at the sacred places hallowed by the Seraphic Father, he sped across the hills, happy in the freedom which the Pope had given him.

(iv)

On reaching the neighbourhood of Montefeltro in the duchy of Urbino, Matteo at once took up his work as an evangelist. Throughout the whole of Lent he was thus engaged. Clad in his coarse habit, barefooted and bearing in his hand the crucifix, he went from place to place : but he kept to the mountainous country away from the neighbourhood of the friaries of his Order, for he feared lest he should be taken and forced to return to the community.[11]

Like other wandering preachers at the time when he came to a town or village, he announced his approach with a loud cry : " To hell, to hell ! ye usurers ; to hell ye adulterers ; to hell ye blasphemers," was his usual cry.[12] A lonely ragged figure was Matteo like the prophet crying in the wilderness: yet loved by the people for his ever-ready sympathy and unselfish devotion in time of need.

So the Lenten season passed. At the end of April the Provincial Chapter of the friars was to be held at Jesi[13] and thither he must go to present himself to the Minister Provincial, as the Pope had commanded.

Matteo was under no illusion that he would be received with cordiality. As he had told the Pope : " Our fathers will not wish that I wear this habit in their company." Yet in his simplicity he was perhaps not prepared for the recep-

[11] Bernardino da Colpetrazzo I, p. 139.

[12] Mario da Mercato-Seraceno : *Epist. ad P. Honorium*, loc. cit. p. 278. See also the attestations of Giovanni Antonio Cosso and Daniele Rosa in P. Gerardo da Villafranca : *P. Matteo da Bascio e P. Paolo da Chioggia* (Chioggia, 1913), p. 93.

[13] The Capuchin chroniclers give the place of this Chapter as Matelica. The Provincial Chapter was held at Matelica in 1526 : in 1525 it took place at Jesi. cf. Alessio d'Arquata : *Cronica della riformata provincia dei Minori della Marca* (Cingoli, 1893), p. 14.

tion he actually received. He was to learn that a man may have a good conscience and still be adjudged a criminal with every appearance of sound law. For Matteo, be it remembered, had no letter of authentication to show his superiors in regard to the concession made to him by the Pope. He had fled from his friary and gone to Rome without leave ; he had returned and wandered about at his own will : and all he could put forward in his defence was his own word that he had the Pope's verbal approval for the life he had embraced. The Minister Provincial was hardly to blame if in such a case he proved sceptical. But Matteo's case was further prejudiced by the fact that he was not the only friar who, without asking leave, had left the community and gone a-wandering. Such fugitives were unfortunately not uncommon. There was for instance just about this time in the territory of Venice a Fra Angelico of whom we shall hear more further on, who in defiance of authority, became a wandering preacher, and set up to be the founder of a new sect.[14] Others there were who, tired of community life, just wandered off at their will. The wandering friar had in fact become a nuisance not only to the Order to which he belonged, but to the people at large.[15] Giovanni da Fano, the Minister Provincial, was therefore in no frame of mind to deal patiently with Matteo : and he was disposed still less to deal patiently with him just because of his plea that he sought to observe more strictly the Rule of the Order. Not that Giovanni was himself a lax religious : as we have already said he was one of those who bewailed the prevalent laxity ; as Minister Provincial he had set himself to enforce a more austere observance of poverty and the regular discipline. But Giovanni had two fast principles : the one, that the law as accepted by the Order—by which he understood the Rule as interpreted by Papal decretals and modifying dispensations—should be rigorously observed, no private or uncanonical relaxations being allowed ; the second that

[14] cf. Bernardino da Colpetrazzo I, p. 320 *seq.*, where mention is also made of a Fra Raffaele, a Venetian, who adopted the Capuchin habit (as it was afterwards called) and gathered around him a band of disciples ; and similarly some hermits near Spoleto. Some of these afterwards joined the Capuchins.

[15] A few years later, in 1532, Gian Pietro Caraffa complained bitterly of these wandering friars in his memorial to Clement VII. cf. Pastor, *Hist. of the Popes*, vol. X, p. 442.

any attempt at reform or a stricter observance should be made within the common life of the community and under the guidance of the superiors so that the effective unity of the Order should be maintained. He did not believe in liberties which allowed individuals or communities to separate from the common observance : rather he would work that the common observance itself should be made stricter. Any individual or sectional movement he regarded as treachery to the Order at large. Such movements, he held, encouraged laxity on the part of the main body by creating a distinction between a common observance and a stricter observance. He resented the assumption that the perfect fulfilment of the Franciscan life was not obtainable in the actual constitution of the Order ; and this resentment arose not from a vulgar conceit but from his very zeal for the honour of the Observant name, the zeal which made him so austere a religious and so rigid an upholder of discipline in the community. Add to this a certain aristocratic temperament—for Giovanni was at once of noble birth and of a mind well-trained in Canon Law[16]—and you will perceive at once the sharp contrast, mental and temperamental, between Matteo and his Minister Provincial. To Matteo the Franciscan Rule was everything, and he could view it only in his unlettered simple way. To Giovanni da Fano the Rule was dear, but he viewed it in its relation to the organised hierarchy of the Order. On all points he judged Matteo to have violated the law of obedience. Contrary to the decrees of John XXII[17] and Leo X[18] he had taken to himself a form of habit other than that commonly worn by the friars : also without permission from his superiors he had fled to Rome, and on his return had gone about preaching without authority, thereby incurring the guilt of apostasy, for which sin according to the bull of Leo X, the Minister Provincial was empowered to seize his person and imprison him, and inflict upon him other condign penances. It was a case in Giovanni's judgment where the welfare of the community at large demanded

[16] Giovanni was of the noble family of the Pili of Fano. He was elected Minister Provincial of the Marches in 1518 and again in 1524. cf. Giuseppe Castellani : *Frate Giovanni Pili da Fano* in *Fano e S. Francesco d'Assisi* (Fano, 1926).

[17] *Gloriosam Ecclesiam*, 23 January, 1318.

[18] *Ite et vos*, 20 May, 1517.

the severest penalties in view of the unrest which was already manifest amongst too many of the friars. Accordingly Matteo was condemned to be imprisoned in the friary of Forano, where, it was to be hoped, confinement and fasting and penitential exercises would bring him to a more obedient frame of mind. Matteo meekly bowed to the judgment and allowed himself unprotestingly to be taken to Forano ; and as meekly submitted to the incarceration and the penances inflicted upon him : God in His own time would manifest his innocence of any sinful disobedience ; meanwhile he must bear the cross and strengthen his soul in patience. For nigh upon three months he was kept a prisoner. By that time it began to be talked about in Forano that Matteo was in the friary under compulsion and doing penance as an apostate. News of his situation was brought to the ears of the Lord Rainuzio Ottoni, who had a residence at Matelica and whose wife Donna Emilia was a daughter of Caterina, Duchess of Camerino. Donna Emilia, like all her family, had not forgotten Matteo's services at Camerino during the plague and at once sent news of Matteo's present condition to her mother. Whereupon the Duchess Caterina without any delay indited a letter to Fra Giovanni da Fano, demanding that Matteo be forthwith given into her hands. "I give you three days," wrote that strong-minded lady ; "if he is not delivered to me you will be banished from my State and I will write to His Holiness and let him know of what little account you hold his commands. Know well that His Holiness has given and conceded to him (Fra Matteo) the licence to go about preaching and to wear the habit with the capuce ; and you would hinder the will of God as His Holiness has declared it. But many words are not needed : do as I have said and save me from carrying this matter further."[19] So towards the end of July, Matteo was set free and sent to Camerino to the Duchess Caterina ; and his first words were to appease her anger against the Minister Provincial and the friars who had imprisoned him.[20] Caterina would have had him abide awhile in the palace, thinking in motherly fashion that he needed some care

[19] B. Feliciangeli, op. cit., pp. 46-47.
[20] Mario da Mercato-Seraceno, *Narratione*, cart. 62.

after the hardships he had undergone. Matteo thanked her for her gracious kindness but begged to be allowed straightway to resume his preaching. And Caterina, promising always to stand his friend in case of need, let him go.

Once again Matteo was free. He went forth a sort of divine vagabond, homeless and of no account in the society of men. Like the first disciples of St. Francis he found shelter where the charity of men opened their doors to him or in some natural retreat or wayside barn. He was a beggar indeed, like the beggar he had befriended that winter's day on his return to the friary of Montefalcone.

One incident that happened a few days after he had left Camerino was a sign of benediction on his new life. He was again in the neighbourhood of Matelica. Not far from the town was a hillside hermitage where dwelt a friar, Fra Francesco da Cartoceto, in company with another recluse Fra Pacifico, a priest of the Third Order of St. Francis. Fra Francesco was an ancient in years : he was one of those who kept alive the earlier tradition of Franciscan simplicity and poverty. Almost blind and nearing his end he was now; but for many years he had prayed for the renewal within the Order of the primitive Franciscan spirit, and hoped that he might see such a renewal before his death. Matteo was bending his steps towards the hermitage, purposing to seek a night's shelter there. It was the first day of August and at sunset would begin the great pardon of the Porziuncola which St. Francis in his love of men's souls had won as a perpetual legacy from Pope Honorius III. Matteo was approaching the hermitage when he was met by Fra Pacifico, who welcomed him with an astonished joy. For it seems that during the previous night Fra Francesco had dreamed that a young man clothed in the primitive habit of the Order was coming towards the hermitage to announce the great joy that the day of renewal was at hand ; and he was alert, awaiting the coming of the stranger. Eagerly therefore Pacifico ushered Matteo to the bedside of the dying friar. For a long time the two friars communed with each other, Francesco listening with delight to Matteo's story and thanking God that he had lived to see this day. Then Pacifico was bidden to shape a habit similar to that worn by Matteo ; and when it was quickly if roughly done, Fran-

cesco bade them clothe him with it. Then having blessed Matteo, the old man folded his hands and died.[21]

After that Matteo continued on his way alone, preaching the Divine word and nursing the sick, for the plague still lingered in places taking its toll of human life.

(v)

Meanwhile Matteo's adventures had become the talk of the friars in the whole Province of Ancona ; much to the disturbance of mind of Giovanni da Fano. The excitement bore fruit towards the end of the year when two friars Lodovico da Fossombrone, a priest, and his brother Raffaele, a lay brother, petitioned the Minister Provincial to allow them to retire to a hermitage with others who wished to join them and to observe the Rule as the first Observants observed it.[22] Giovanni da Fano peremptorily refused their request. But Lodovico da Fossombrone was not a man to be easily daunted. He came of a family accustomed to arms and he had in him the self-confidence and fearlessness which had made his father, Ser Niccolo, a military leader of repute. Rebuffed by the Minister, Lodovico and his brother took to flight and found a temporary refuge with the Conventual friars at Cingoli.[23] It was not uncommon for the friars of one branch of the Order to pass over to the other, notwithstanding the prohibition of Leo X : and Lodovico hoped that under the jurisdiction of the Conventuals he

[21] Such is the story as told by Bernardino da Colpetrazzo. So also Mario da Mercato-Seraceno in *Epistola ad P. Honorium* (loc. cit.) and Giovanni da Terra Nuova in his Chronicle, *Anal. ord. Cap.* vol. XXIII, p. 15.

Boverius, following Mattia da Salò (*Historia Capuccina* I, p. 70), says that Matteo visited Francesco da Cartoceto first on his way to Rome and again on his return journey. *Annales, anno* 1525.

Francesco da Cartoceto's dream is illustrative of the opinion widely held by the more zealous Observants at this time, that a new Reform was about to be begun. See the story of the lay brother, related by Wadding, *anno* 1520, XXVIII.

[22] Bernardino da Colpetrazzo I, p. 155, says of Lodovico : *Da molti frati era solicitato che volesse intrare nella riforma, e questi erano frati zelanti.*

[23] *Riformaze Cingolane*, p. 172, quoted by P. Edouard d'Alençon in *De Primordiis Ordinis FF. Min. Capuccinorum* (Romae, 1921), p. 21.

might achieve his purpose of founding a hermitage. Thereupon Giovanni da Fano appealed to the Minister General and the Pope, with the result that on March 8, 1526, Clement VII issued a brief stigmatising the two fugitives, and even Matteo da Bascio, as apostates, and empowering him to arrest and imprison them until they made submission.[24] Thus armed with the law Giovanni da Fano with a band of friars set out for Cingoli ; but news of their coming reached the two fugitives who took to the neighbouring hills. There the search went on for some days. At one time Lodovico and Raffaele were cornered. It was in the shadow of the evening : Giovanni and his band had approached the spot where the two fugitives lay and whence there was no escape. Suddenly the stillness was broken by weird unearthly cries, and Giovanni and his company, shaken with fear, took to flight.[25] Lodovico, you perceive, was a man of resource.

History takes up the course of the adventure on the Saturday before Palm Sunday when Lodovico and Raffaele presented themselves at the monastery of the Camaldolese hermits at Massaccio, begging to be granted shelter and protection. According to the account left us by Paolo Giustiniani, the Visitor of the monastery, who was there at the time, the two friars related how with apostolic permission they had separated from their own community with the intention of leading an eremitical life under the Rule of St. Francis. The Camaldolese were sympathetic ; yet wishful to act according to law and with courtesy, they at once communicated with the Observant friars of the Romita near Massaccio. The Observant superior sent back word that he himself was willing that the two fugitives should be affiliated to the Order of the Camaldolese : it would be a good riddance for the Observants, he said in effect, if they were. Whereupon the Visitor of the Camaldolese proposed that Lodovico and Raffaele should be received as members of that Order and so everything would be regularised. A

[24] Brief *Cum nuper*, in Archivio Vaticano, Arm. 39, vol. 55, f. 36 t., published by P. Edouard d'Alençon, *De Primordiis*, pp. 21-22.

[25] Boverius, *anno* 1526, lxiv-lxix : The story is confirmed by Mario da Mercato-Seraceno in his *Narratione*, cart. 75. Mario says he heard the story from Giovanni himself, who afterwards laughed at his own fear.

cf. Bernardino da Colpetrazzo I, p. 185.

few days later, however, Giovanni da Fano with some Observants and the " capitano " of Massaccio appeared at the gates of the monastery " *con insolenze ed evaginatis gladiis*," demanding the bodies of the fugitives. This the Visitor would not allow : for notwithstanding the gesture of courtesy he had shown the Observants, the Camaldolese had by law the right to admit anyone, even religious of other Orders, to their community. To end an unedifying contention and a possible attempt to use force, the Visitor gave an order quietly to one of his monks to disguise the two friars in the habit of the Camaldolese and hurry them away to the neighbouring monastery of the Order at Pascelupo. But the Observants with the " capitano " of Massaccio, discovering the ruse, pursued the fugitives to Pascelupo and again demanded their bodies ; but once more the Camaldolese refused to surrender them and remained masters of the field. By this time Lodovico and Raffaele had formally requested to be aggregated to the hermits of Camaldoli ; and their request was considered at a Chapter of the monks ; but for the sake of peace with the Observants the Chapter decided not to receive them.[26]

According to some, Lodovico, thus turned adrift, sought out Fra Matteo, who bade him do as he had done ; go to Rome and throw himself on the judgment of the Apostolic See. Matteo, so the story goes, made it clear that the permission granted to himself did not allow him to aggregate companions : it was personal to himself alone. But to facilitate their journey he introduced them to the Duchess of Camerino who promised them her protection and influence.[27] Another conjecture is that Lodovico and Raffaele went direct from the Camaldolese to Rome, armed with introductions from Paolo Giustiniani.[28] In either case from the jurist's point of

[26] cf. *De commoratione Ludovici et Raphaelis a Forosempronis apud Eremitas Camaldulenses*, in *Anal. Ord. Cap.* vol. xxv, pp. 249, *seq.* See the letter of B. Paolo Giustiniani published by Dom Pacido T. Lugano, O.S.B., in *La Congregazione Camaldolese degli Eremiti de Montecorona* (Frascati, 1908), p. 205, *seq.* The assertion said to have been made by Lodovico in this account, that they had left their community with Papal permission, creates a difficulty. Did they presume that the licence given by the Pope to Fra Matteo was general for all wishing to observe the Rule more strictly ?

[27] Boverius, *anno* 1526. So, too, Mario da Mercato-Seraceno, *Descrizione*, loc. cit., p. 19.

[28] cf. P. Edouard d'Alençon, *De Primordiis*, p. 24.

view it was all very irregular ; but we are dealing with a time when most things, whether for good or for evil, were done irregularly according to the letter of the law.

So Lodovico and Raffaele now went to Rome. It is, however, clear that Lodovico's purpose was not that of Matteo da Bascio. Lodovico was intent not merely on obtaining permission to live his own life in accordance with a stricter observance of the Rule ; already he had in view an eremitical community similar to many which were already springing up within the Observant family ; for Lodovico, as will become clear, was not a man who could live without a following. Scarcely three weeks since the two fugitives had been turned adrift from Pascelupo, Lodovico received a brief from the Grand Penitentiary, Cardinal Pucci, granting to himself, his brother Raffaele and Matteo da Bascio permission to separate from the community and live in a hermitage according to the Rule of St. Francis. They were indeed first to ask the permission of their Provincial Superior ; but should permission be refused they might still avail themselves of the apostolic permission now granted. They were to live under the protection of the Bishop of Camerino, though still remaining formal members of the Observant family, and they were permitted to collect alms for their sustenance and to enjoy all privileges accorded to the Order of Friars Minor ; they must, however, retain the habit of the Order to which they belonged.[29] Thus Lodovico and Raffaele gained their freedom, yet, as will be perceived, it was again a favour purely personal to themselves. It gave them no authority to admit associates nor to found a separate congregation. They were in fact still Observants, wearing the Observant habit, but living under special conditions. Possibly at this time Lodovico did not dare ask for more. Moreover, to form a separate congregtion Lodovico would have required a more personal approbation from the Pope. The brief he received was merely an official licence from the Grand Penitentiary, issued it is true in the Pope's name but without his personal knowledge. Such briefs were easily obtained at this period,

[29] Brief *Ex parte vestra* of May 18 : *Bullarium Cap.* I, p. 1. The inclusion of Matteo's name in the brief seems to indicate that Lodovico and Raffaele had been in communication with Matteo.

provided one had the money to pay for them.[30] For the moment Lodovico was content : not so Giovanni da Fano. No sooner did he hear of Lodovico's move than he made personal application to the Pope protesting against the permission granted by the Penitentiary as being subversive of all regular authority and common discipline. If such permissions were allowed to stand, what was to prevent any friar tired of community life and the yoke of obedience from wandering off at will under pretext of a stricter observance? Giovanni's protest was backed by the influence of the Minister General Quiñones. The reply of Clement VII, it would seem, was favourable to Giovanni and the Observant superiors,[31] and the Pope is said to have dissociated himself from the permission granted by the Grand Penitentiary, and to have expressed disapproval of it as being against the welfare of religion.

In the meanwhile another friar, of like mind to Matteo da Bascio, appears on the scene, Paolo da Chioggia. The story of how he came to be associated with Matteo is not altogether clear. Paolo—so the traditional story runs—had been an Observant friar and had gained repute both as a good religious and a powerful preacher. His mother being left a widow in needy circumstances, Paolo, compelled by filial duty, had become secularised in order to support her. Yet he continued to live an examplary life in his native city edifying all who came in contact with him by his austerity of life and his love of retirement from the world. One day there appeared in Chioggia a friar already alluded to in this story, Fra Angelico, garbed in a habit which he declared to be of the primitive form as worn by St. Francis, that is with a wide hood sewn to the gown. He was commissioned by the Pope, so he gave out, to revive the primitive Franciscan observance. He was a passionate preacher, and this, together with his austere poverty, won him the hearing of the people and not a few followers, amongst whom was

[30] One of the complaints made by the reforming party in the Curia concerned the facility with which religious could obtain personal exemptions from the Penitentiary, to the disturbance and scandal of their fellow religious. It was one of the abuses mentioned in Gian Pietro Caraffa's indictment which he addressed to Clement VII in 1532. cf. P. Edouard d'Alençon, *De Primordiis*, p. 26, note 2.

[31] So Giovanni da Fano relates in his treatise *Dialogo de la salute*, p. 26.

Paolo. But disillusionment came when it was found that Angelico was but a common fugitive bent on making a sensation and without any authorisation from the Holy See. Nevertheless the soul of Paolo had been touched with a fervent desire to live as St. Francis lived. Wherefore he set out to Rome and obtained permission to wear the habit Angelico had taught him to wear and to observe the Rule in its literal strictness. On his way thither he came to Fabriano and there met Matteo and for the first time heard of Matteo's concession from Clement VII and of the doings of Lodovico and Raffaele. Straightway he asked to be associated with them. By Matteo's advice he then pursued his purpose of seeking the Pope's sanction, and having received it, returned and joined himself to Matteo and with him went to Fossombrone, where they found Lodovico and Raffaele ; he thus became the fourth member of the new Reform, if such it might yet be called.[32]

But Lodovico and Raffaele were themselves in no secure position. Giovanni da Fano, armed with the Pope's brief and the Pontiff's repudiation of the Penitentiary's licence, was making every effort to get them arrested as apostates. Matteo he held to be safeguarded by the verbal permission accorded by the Pope in 1525 ; also there was the acknowledged protection of the Duchess Caterina to be considered.

[32] As has been said, Paolo's history is not altogether clear. Mario da Mercato-Saraceno in his *Narratione*, cart 78-86, says that when Matteo da Bascio was returning from Rome in 1525 he passed through Perugia. A certain Fra Angelico della Fratta, seeing him, without consulting Matteo, adopted his form of habit and without licence from the Pope began to preach, but fearing persecution, he fled to Venice and made himself a nest, which he called " the hermitage," and began to receive associates. The first to be received was Paolo da Chioggia. (See also Mattia da Salò, *Historia Capuccina*, pp. 95-96). Paolo next formed a community of hermits, but not wishing to go against his conscience by forming a community without authority, he went to Rome to obtain the Pope's permission. What seems certain is that Paolo had already begun to live " after the Capuchin manner " before he knew Matteo da Bascio. On that ground in 1579 an attempt was made by Gioseffo Zarlini da Chioggia in a pamphlet published in Venice, to prove that Paolo was the institutor of the Capuchin Reform.

cf. P. Gerardo da Villafranca, op. cit.

P. Edouard d'Alençon is sceptical of the whole story. In particular he sees no reason why Paolo should go to Rome to receive permission to adopt the new form of life, since he was already secularised and therefore no longer subject to the Observants. To me this reasoning seems weak, especially if the story as it relates to Fra Angelico be true. In such case the Pope's permission—or at least the permission of the Penitentiary—would give greater security.

But for Lodovico he had neither compunction nor tolerance. He now addressed himself to the Duke of Urbino in whose territory Fossombrone was situated, and demanded the arrest of the two friars. But the Duke was not anxious to offend the Duchess of Camerino, with whose family he was considering a matrimonial alliance ; nor was he disposed lightly to accede to any man's demand concerning his own subjects. So the friars went unarrested and finally made their way for greater security to Camerino, where they sought the ready protection of the Duke and Duchess. Failing to take them by force, Giovanni next sought to win back the fugitives (as he not illegally regarded them) by persuasion. To this end he betook himself to Camerino and pleaded with the Duke and Duchess to withdraw their protection. The peace and security of the Observant communities, he declared, was in danger owing to the example set by the two fugitives and Matteo : their defiance of authority had caused unrest amongst many ; moreover, the people, not understanding the justice of the case but led away by an unreasoning sympathy, were aroused against the Observants ; and thus much harm was done to the Order. Therefore, he said, he wished to confer with Matteo and his associates in the hope of bringing them to a better mind. A conference was in fact held in the presence of the Duke and of the Duchess Caterina. Giovanni began badly : he was not yet used to bearing the olive-branch. He upbraided the three friars, Matteo, Lodovico and Raffaele, for deserting the family and bringing disturbance into the communities of the Province ; he denounced them bitterly as fugitives and apostates from the Order. Then remembering his mission he promised, should they return to their obedience, that he would treat them with fatherly kindness, nor bear any ill-will towards them.

At that Matteo replied briefly and simply as was his way. Taking from his sleeve a copy of the Rule he exclaimed : " This is the cause why we have left the community. To observe this Rule we have left the community where we could not observe it." But Lodovico, not content with this answer, set forth in detail the relaxations in the community and dramatically asked : " Things being as they are in the community, can the Minister accuse us of desertion and

apostasy, seeing that both Saint Francis and the Apostolic See have freed us from apostasy?" The conference ended in an outspoken defence of Matteo and his associates by the Duchess Caterina; and to this the Duke assented, bidding Giovanni leave the friars in peace and respect the licence granted them by the Apostolic See. So runs the account given by the annalist.[33] It says nothing of Giovanni's probable retort that Pope Clement had revoked the Grand Penitentiary's concessions: though such retort would doubtless be unconvincing to Caterina the Duchess, who would certainly reply that the Pope's brief to the Observant Superiors had been obtained by false reports as to the character of the three friars whose only sin was that they desired to observe the Rule more strictly. As we have said, it was a time when things moved forward whether for good or ill by irregular methods—a time when influence and favour more frequently than justice wielded the law and so brought the law to confusion, and when men had come to rest the rightfulness of a case more frequently upon what they considered its inherent justice than upon external legality. The divorce of law from justice had thus wreaked its revenge upon the law or at least upon the lawyers. With clearer insight than Giovanni himself yet possessed, his friend Baptista Varani, sister of the Duke of Camerino and abbess of the Poor Clares in the city, had urged him to leave this matter of the three friars in the hands of God. "Refrain from these men and let them alone," she had written to him, quoting the words of Gamaliel, "for if this work be of men it will come to nought, but if it be of God you cannot overthrow it."[34] But Giovanni was persuaded that this work was of men and that, moreover, it was his duty to overthrow it: little deeming that he himself would one day be one of its master-builders. But for the time he retired baulked of his aim, and devoted himself to the writing of a treatise in form of a dialogue to warn the

[33] Boverius, *anno* 1527—The long speech which Boverius attributes to Lodovico is curiously similar to the argumentative reply of Bernardino da Reggio, a Calabrian friar, to the Observant agents sent to arrest him, and reported by Mario da Mercato-Seraceno in his *Descrizione*, loc. cit., p. 42, *seq.*

[34] cf. Bolland: *Acta SS.*, mense Maii, VII, p. 511. *Beata Baptista Varani et primordia ord. F.M. Cap.* in *Anal. Ord., Cap.*, vol. xxii, p. 243, *seq.*

brethren against the evil example of these apostates, and to show them the better way of perfection.[35]

And now plague and sorrow were to justify yet more the good opinion in which the sorely-tried friars were held in the city of Camerino and its neighbourhood. In the early months of the year 1527 came the plague, adding its terrors to the alarming reports of the emperor's invasion of Italy and of the savage ferocity of his Spanish and German mercenaries. In Camerino strong men blenched with fear, remembering the awful death-roll of 1523, and soon it was recognised that the scourge of 1527 would be no more merciful. And with the plague and the war came famine, for the army of the emperor devastated the land wherever it came.

Matteo and his three associates gave themselves over entirely to the service of the stricken people. They nursed the sick and comforted the dying, and as death took a heavy toll they often assisted in burying the dead. For the starving poor they went abroad in quest of food. Whether by day or by night there was no needed service which called to them in vain. At first they had no proper lodging in the city and often they went without their daily meal, too intent on serving others to think of their own needs. At length the Duchess Caterina, fearing for their physical strength, persuaded them to take a simple lodging she had prepared for them within the castle, where they would be fed and find some rest amid their incessant labours.

Then towards the middle of May came the almost unbelievable news that Rome had fallen before the attack of the emperor's troops and that the Pope was a prisoner in the castle of Sant' Angelo. Soon upon this came further word of the sack of Rome ; the city was in ruins, churches had been violated and their treasures, even the sacred vessels, seized by the soldiery ; men, women and children were

35 *Dialogo di la salute tra el frate stimulato e el frate rationabile circa la regula de li frati minori e sue dechiaratione per stimulati.* The dialogue was published at Ancona by master Bernardino of Vercelli on June 5, 1527. It reveals Giovanni as one zealous for the maintenance of poverty ; but he would have it to be a becoming decent poverty. The main point of the argument is : " Can we with a safe conscience follow the community ?" to which Fra Rationabile replied : " We can and we must " (*Dialogo*, p. 57). In this reply lay the essential question, as we have already remarked, which was later to be fought out between the reformers and the partisans of the community.

being ruthlessly slaughtered ; the cardinals were in the hands of the soldiers who treated them with every indignity: not even the nuns were spared. As the news filtered through, the whole of Italy reeled with stupefied horror and amazement. It was as though the world were at an end ; plague and famine and war—and now Rome the Eternal plundered and in ruins, the Pope besieged in Sant' Angelo by the imperial rabble, who respected neither God nor man. Camerino shared in the stupefaction. Its immediate effect was the disorganisation of all conception of society : it was a moral as well as a political disruption such as might be when chaos sweeps the land. Whilst the people of Camerino were still reeling under the shock, the abbess Baptista Varani, sister of the Duke, died of the plague. Her beautiful holiness, enveloping as it did one of the most vivacious intellects of the time, had cast a glory over the city. Three months later the Duke himself fell a victim to the relentless scourge—the last of the Varani to hold secure the independence of the city. In such catastrophic gloom did the four friars move ceaselessly amongst the stricken citizens, serving and heartening the sick and weary by their own indomitable spirit of faith and charity.

Yet had they still to bear the cross which was intimately their own. At a Chapter of the Observants held in May a renewed demand was made for the extinction of the subversive friars who were fighting the plague and the gloom in Camerino ; following the Chapter further fulminations were launched against them. But Caterina, the Duchess, though her hands were full with the sorrows of her city, was not therefore the less careful of the friars who were serving her people so well. In co-operation with the Bishop of Camerino she made a counterstroke for which Giovanni da Fano, it would seem, was unprepared ; not improbably it was Lodovico who suggested it. It was a petition to the Provincial Superior of the Conventual Franciscans to take Lodovico and his companions under their protection. Caterina herself wrote to the Master General of the Conventuals and to the Cardinal Protector of the Order, Andrea della Valle, urging this solution of the difficulty. The Conventual General replied that he would willingly accept the four friars in a manner as his own sons (*tanquam proprios*);

they would be free to live the life they aspired to, only they must every year present themselves before the Provincial Minister of the Conventuals in token of their dependence.

Yet this did not content the watchful Duchess. She recognised that the four friars were in an anomalous position. They were in reality a mere company voluntarily associated : they had no proper status as an organised society ; separated from the larger community, they yet formed no community of their own and except for the light supervision of the Provincial of the Conventuals, they were under no proper superior. That was the weakness of their position from a juridical point of view. The Duchess Caterina recognised the anomalous position and now was determined to use all her influence so that the position of the friars should be definitely regularised.

Early in June 1528 Clement VII was with his court at Viterbo. He had escaped from the castle of Sant' Angelo in the first days of December and for six months had taken refuge in the poverty-stricken fortress of Orvieto. Lack of the very necessaries of life finally drove him hence : at Viterbo it was hoped things would be more tolerable. Hither a few weeks later came the Duchess Caterina to put the matter of the friars plainly before His Holiness, with the freedom a niece might profitably use. She had brought with her a petition signed by Lodovico and Raffaele, which besought the Pope to grant unto the two supplicants permission to live an eremitical life under the Rule of St. Francis, to wear the beard and the habit with the square hood sewn to the habit and to preach to the people. Further it was requested that the associates should be under the protection of the Conventual Friars Minor but directly governed by a superior of their own having authority similar to that exercised by Ministers Provincial ; and that they be empowered to receive clerics and even religious of whatsoever Order, provided they have asked leave of their superiors, even though leave be not granted them, and also laics who might wish by divine inspiration to lead a like solitary and austere life.[36]

The Pope on receiving the petition at first hesitated : he

[36] cf. P. Edouard d'Alençon : *De Primordiis*, p. 44, *seq.*, where the original text of Lodovico's petition is edited from the copy in the Vatican Archives.

would consider the matter and take counsel with the cardinals. Caterina the Duchess was well content to await the result; she herself would not fail to give advice to these same cardinals. So it came about that on July 3, 1528 Clement issued a brief which a few days later was set forth in the more solemn form of a bull addressed to Lodovico and Raffaele da Fossombrone, conferring a canonical status on the new fraternity and granting all that Lodovico and Raffaele asked for.[37]

The bull *Religionis Zelus* was the charter of what soon was to be known as the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin.[38]

The heart of the Duchess Caterina was glad as she set forth to return to Camerino carrying with her the precious document. On her arrival she caused it to be proclaimed by the Court heralds in the public square of the city; and the Bishop Bongiovanni, rivalling the Duchess' enthusiasm, ordered the bull to be read to the people in all the churches of the diocese. Camerino was proud of its friars and their triumph: it had not forgotten the years of the great plagues.[39] But in the friary at Matelica, Fra Giovanni da Fano took anxious thought for the future.

[37] *Religionis Zelus*, Bullar. *Ord. Cap.* I, pp. 3-4. The original copy, it may be noticed, is endorsed: "*Intercedente ducissa Camarin, pro Ludovico et Raffaello fratribus et fratribus ord. conventualium minorum.*" cf. *De Primordiis*, p. 46, *seq.*

No explicit mention is made in the bull of the faculty to receive religious of other Orders. Yet this omission was made good—though probably unconsciously on the Pope's part—by the final paragraph, allowing to the new congregation all the privileges enjoyed by the Friars Minor and the Camalcolese. One of the privileges of the Camaldolese, was that religious of any Order might be received by them; and in virtue of this privilege Lodovico would be free to accept even Observant Friars, should they come to him. Still it is clear that at first Lodovico was either unaware of his privilege or did not think it wise to avail himself of it as regards the Observants. The Observants, who next joined him, received permission to do so from the Grand Penitentiary.

[38] It should be noticed that it was in virtue of this bull that the friars, other than Matteo, were allowed to adopt the "primitive" form of the Franciscan habit. The brief of May 18, 1526 enjoined on Lodovico and Raffaele to wear the Observant habit.

[39] Boverius, *anno* 1528.

P. Edouard d'Alençon regards with suspicion the story of the Duchess' triumphant return with the bull to Camerino. Yet it is perfectly in keeping with the character of Caterina and inherently not improbable.

CHAPTER II

FIRST DAYS OF THE REFORM

(i)

UNTIL now Matteo and the small company who had gathered to him had no dwelling they could in any sense claim as their own. But as a recognised religious congregation with canonical power to accept novices, it became necessary that they should have some abiding dwelling place set apart for their use. The bull *Religionis Zelus* assumed that they would live in hermitages or small religious houses. The Bishop of Camerino therefore made over to them for their use the small church and presbytery of San Cristoforo, somewhat more than a mile distant from the city beyond the Porta dell' Annunziata. Hardly had they settled there than five Observant friars petitioned to join them. In due time these were admitted, permission having been granted for their transference by the Grand Penitentiary.[1] But before they could be received it was necessary to find a larger dwelling place. Whereupon at the instance of the Duchess Caterina the Hieronymite monks made over to them a practically deserted hermitage three miles from the city, in the wooded district known as Colmenzone.[2] Within a few days six more novices came, of whom four were Observant friars, and this made a new foundation imperative, since it was a first principle of the Reform that only a few friars should dwell in one place. So before the end of 1528 a second hermitage

[1] cf. Pius a Langonio : *Bullarii Ord. Min. Cap. Regestum*, p. 23. Boverius, *Annales anno* 1526.

[2] The Hieronymites were a congregation founded in the beginning of the fifteenth century by two Franciscan tertiaries, Carlo da Monte Granello and Galtero da Marso. They afterwards adopted the rule of St. Augustine. cf. Wadding, *Annales, anno* 1405. The monastery had originally been occupied by the Franciscan Clarini before it came to the Hieronymites. cf. *Analecta Ord. Min. Cap. XXIV*, p. 24.

was found at Monte Melone.[3] Of this hermitage Fra Lodovico was chosen superior. Early in the following year two more hermitages were occupied, one at Albacina near Fabriano,[4] which like the first two was in the diocese of Camerino; the other at Fossombrone in the diocese of Montefeltro, which was thus the first step in the wider extension of the Reform. In these days the general government of the nascent congregation was in the hands of Lodovico, to whom in conjunction with Fra Raffaele the Papal bull had granted the faculty of receiving associates; but all looked to Matteo as the father of the Reform, and Lodovico it would seem was no less loyal than the others. But Matteo was not born for administration and government: enough for him was the burden and responsibility of his own soul. In his selfless charity he willingly gave what help and encouragement was in his power to give to the members of the new family which in some way, though not by deliberate intent, he had been instrumental in bringing into being. Yet he shrank from the leadership which the reverence and affection of the others would have forced upon him.

Towards the end of April, 1529, a chapter consisting of twelve members of the Reform was convoked by Lodovico, for the purpose of electing superiors and drawing up a Constitution.[5] The number of friars, twelve, called to the chapter was significant; since it was with twelve companions that St. Francis had drawn up his original Rule and gone to Rome to seek the Papal approbation of his fraternity.[6]

One must go back in mind to the first days of the Francis-

[3] To-day known as Pollenza, between Macerata and Tolentino. Nearby was the castle of La Rancia, a residence of the Dukes of Camerino.

[4] The hermitage of Albacina attached to the church of Santa Maria in Acquarella had been occupied by hermits in the fourteenth century. In 1441 it became the property of the Chapter of the Lateran basilica. cf. P. Edouard d'Alençon, *De Primordiis*, p. 60, note 6. See *Epistolae duæ ad P. Matthiam Salodiensem* in *Anal. Ord. Cap. vol. xxii*, p. 139, *seq.*

[5] According to Bernardino da Colpetrazzo (I, p. 293), it was the brethren who suggested to Lodovico the holding of a Chapter to elect superiors "according to the custom of the Order."

[6] Similarly the first layman received into the Reform, Gerolamo dello Scorzolo, was named Bernard, in memory of Bernard da Quintavalle, the first companion of St. Francis. Gerolamo was a man of some wealth and, like the first Franciscan Bernard, distributed his goods to the poor in the public square of Fossombrone on the eve of entering the Order.

can fraternity to find such another Chapter as that which now assembled at the hillside hermitage of Albacina. In no order of decency could the twelve be lodged in the narrow hermitage ; to receive them all it was necessary to build some wattle huts. Of food there was a scarcity, for the friars would not fare better than their hungry neighbours, even when the affection of the people would force gifts upon them. They had neither beds nor tables ; they slept on straw upon the ground. When not engaged in the work of the Chapter the twelve spent their time in prayer, avoiding useless conversation and distraction : and as one reads the Constitution which was the result of their deliberations and the mirror of their sacred ambition, it is the spirit of prayer and the unworldliness of the mountain solitude which confronts one, shaming with the simplicity of a great faith the prudence of the world and of the flesh. The Constitution, too, was written not in clerkly Latin but in the Italian vernacular which the community spoke—a symptom of the simplicity of all their doings.

Thus then were the friars of the new reform to live. They were to recite the Divine Office on a monotone without chant or modulation of voice, and rise at midnight for Matins even on the last three days of Holy Week. No public office was to be added to the Divine Office, that so the brothers might have more time for mental prayer. Only one Mass was ordinarily to be said in each friary at which all the priests should be present ; but on solemn feasts all the priests might celebrate. They were not to accept stipends for Masses, nor to sing High Masses to attract a concourse of people. On no account were they to follow funerals or celebrate dirges ; nor to take part in processions except the liturgical processions of Corpus Christi and Rogation days. Silence was to be strictly observed in the friaries. At table ordinarily only one dish was to be served. The friars were not to quest for meat, cheese or eggs ; but if these foods were voluntarily offered them, they might accept them. No store of food might be laid in beyond what was necessary for three or four days or a week at most ; but they must quest from day to day. Those who were unable to go barefooted might wear sandals. The Superiors were to send out preachers frequently " that they may not be idle

in the vineyard of the Lord" ; and not only during Lent, but at all times ; but they must not accept any remuneration for their preaching. The preachers in their sermons were to shun subtle arguments and flowers of speech ; they must preach simply in fervour of spirit. They were not to use many books for the preparation of their sermons, one or two books only being allowed them. Classes for the study of literature were not to be established ; but the friars might study the Sacred Scriptures and such devout authors "as love God and teach us to embrace the cross of Christ." The friars were not to hear the confessions for seculars save in cases of necessity ; nor to undertake the charge of convents without the consent of the General Chapter. They might not have syndics or procurators (to provide for their temporal wants) : "No other syndic shall there be for us save only Christ our Lord ; and our procurator and protector shall be the most blessed Virgin Mother of God ; our deputy shall be our father St. Francis ; but all other procurators we altogether reject." Their houses were to be built outside cities and towns yet not far distant from them ; the proprietorship always being vested in the municipality or the donor, who might turn the friars out at will ; in which case the brethren must without delay go and seek another place. Wherever possible the houses must be constructed of wattles and mud ; but where this is not possible stone may be used ; the cells were to be so poor and small that they might be taken for sepulchres rather than cells. The churches too must be small and poor, though withal decent and clean ; only two or three vestments were allowed and these must not be of velvet, silk or gold cloth. Even the chalices must be of pewter, not of silver or gold.[7]

Such in brief were the Constitutions of Albacina. Almost every clause was directed against an existing abuse. In the churches even of the Franciscans the spirit of the Renaissance with its love of display had cast out simplicity ; the severe chant of the liturgy had given place to melodies more suited to the theatre than to a church. The following of

[7] cf. *Le Prime Costituzioni dei Frati Minori Cappuccini*, Roma, 1913. The original Italian text is given in Mattia da Salò : *Historia Capuccina*. Boverius, *Annales*, *anno* 1529, gives a Latin version of this text ; but his version in several instances is incorrect.

funerals, the chanting of dirges, and the private celebrations of Masses had come to be looked upon as sources of income. Mental prayer and the cultivation of interior life had at this time but little place even in religious communities where religion had become almost exclusively a matter of external formalities and popular celebrations. Preaching, too, had degenerated into mere oratory ; and the cultivation of the ancient classics was held of more account than the study of the Fathers of the Church. Theology itself had become a barren dialectical pastime, having long since fallen away from the virile thinking and serious purpose of the creators of the Scholastic School.

So utterly had the life and thought of the time lost the very instinct of religion, that a new beginning—or an abrupt breaking away from the present—seemed to many the only sure road to reform. It was that which led to the widespread revival of the eremitical and contemplative forms of the religious life. Salvation lay in discarding the secularising developments which had overgrown the fair garden of religion like luxuriant weeds, and in a return to the almost forgotten but essential spiritual content of Christian faith and practice. In such light must we view the Constitutions of Albacina. They were a revolt against the worldliness and unreality which reigned in the high places of Christendom and amongst Christians at large. They are thus an incident of no mean character in the emergence of the Catholic Reformation. Not that the friars assembled in that rude hermitage in the Marches of Ancona had any world-wide scheme in their mind's vision : they were but seeking to be true to themselves and to the ideal life which held their desire. But then it is mostly in this wise that the vital streams of life take their rise.[8]

The drawing up of the Constitutions was the main purpose of the Chapter—that and the election of the Superiors of the new congregation. At the election Matteo was chosen

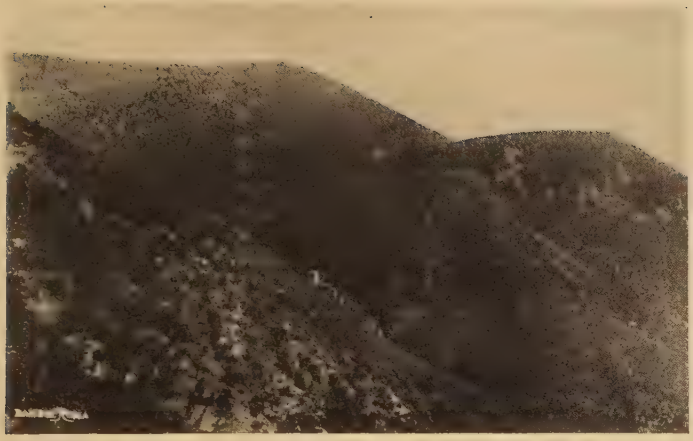
[8] On two points in their Constitutions the Capuchins seem to have been influenced by the customs of the Camaldolese hermits—the wearing of the beard in its natural form and the chanting of the Divine Office on a monotone. In the later discarded Constitutions of 1638 the motive for the wearing o the beard was declared to be " the example of Christ the Most Holy, of the Seraphic Father St. Francis and other saints." No such motive is given in the Constitutions of Albacina. cf. P. Edouard d'Alençon, *De Primordiis*, pp. 50, 51.

Vicar General notwithstanding his tearful pleading that this burden should not be imposed upon him, and with him were associated in the governing council Lodovico da Fossombrone, Angelo da Sant' Angelo in Vado (one of the latest adherents to the reform) and Paolo da Chioggia. So ended the Chapter of Albacina.

The new reform was now definitively established with a written Constitution and canonical superiors. But it still had no distinctive appellation to mark it off from the family of the Observant Franciscans and the family of the Conventuals. The Papal bull *Religionis Zelus* had indeed described them as Friars Minor of the eremitical life—*de vita heremetica;* but that was an appellation common to many Franciscan communities living in hermitages. It was the people who gave them the name by which they were to be known in history. For when the friars first appeared in the streets of Camerino, clothed in their coarse habits and wearing the beard, the children of the city at once connected them with the wandering hermits and so greeted them, exclaiming : " Scapuccini ! Scapuccini !"—" Hermits ! Hermits !" and before long the people generally came to refer to the friars as " Frati Scapuccini." After a while even the Roman writers adopted the popular nickname, softening it to *Cappuccini ;* though not without an attempt to enforce the appellation of *Capuciati*, the designation already in use amongst the friars who wore the larger hood. But the popular name prevailed, though purists in Latin still speak of them as *Capulati.* In the English tongue we call them Capuchins.[9]

[9] Clement VII first uses the title Capuciati in his brief of April 9, 1534 (cf. Bull. Capp. I, p. 11-12). Paul III on Dec. 18, 1534, in the bull *Nuper accepto*, addressed it : *Fratribus ordinis minorum Cappuciatis nuncupatis.* In a brief dated Jan. 12, 1535, the title *Cappuccini* is used for the first time in official documents.

cf. P. Edouard d'Alençon, *De Primordiis*, p. 51, *seq.* Boverius (*Annales, anno* 1529) relates that the name was first given by the children of Camerino as an affectionate appellation, when they noticed the large hood worn by the friars. But the picture drawn of the children thus affectionately greeting the friars on their appearance in the streets, is contradicted by Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, who says : " *Le donne e i fanciullic come gli vedevano, fuggivano, tanto terrore gli dava quel capuccio, vedendogli con le barbe lunghe et cosi austeri* (Chronica II, *Dell Santa Poverta*, p. 1236).



S. MARIA DELL' ACQUARELLA, ALBACINA

THE FRIARY OF CAMERINO, BUILT IN 1531

(ii)

One who knew them has left us a description of the life of the first Capuchins as he himself witnessed it ; and his description proves that the Constitutions of Albacina were no merely pious aspiration, but a simple statement of a life actually lived. Their garments, he tells us, were of the coarsest material ; they went barefooted even in winter, holding a crucifix in their hands. There was water, bread, vegetables and fruit ; seldom did they eat flesh-meat. They observed the fasts rigorously, some of them fasting almost continually. Their dwellings they chose by preference in lonely places, two or three miles from the town, and they were as simple and poor as it was possible to have them ; they were built of wood and loam. A board served for their bed ; the weaker brethren being allowed a mat. The doors of the cells were so low that a man must stoop to enter them ; the windows were narrow and small and without glass. Their churches were small, " the size of the Sanctuary of our Lady at Loreto " : they were simple and clean, devoid of all precious ornaments ; even the sacred vestments were simple and poor. Everything preached poverty.[10]

Of their domestic life he tells us : it was the custom of " our first fathers," following the example of St. Francis, to take to the owner of their places a gift of salad or fruit by way of rent, and to thank the owner for allowing them to occupy the place during the past year, and they would then ask permission to continue there for another year.[11] And of their domestic life this same writer informs us : " When the brethren were on a journey in those first days of the congregation and came to one of our places, the brethren in the place seeing them from afar would cry out once or twice : Praised be our Lord Jesus Christ ! and the brethren on the road would respond in the same manner ; and when they met they would embrace each other with great gladness and even with tears for the joy which filled the hearts of

[10] Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, II, p. 1233, *seq.* See also *Relazione del luogo di Commenzone e di Frate Bernardo da Offida* in *Anal. Ord. Cap.* vol. xxiv, p. 23, *seq.*

[11] St. Francis, in order to avoid any appearance of ownership, ordered the brethren every year to take a basket of fish to the Abbot of Monte Sabasio, as rent for the use of the Porziuncola.

these servants of God at the coming of the brethren, and for three days they ceased not to load them with every possible charity. And in those days the brethren talked amongst themselves of nothing but the things of God and of their congregation with a humble and low voice, trusting to God to prosper them and to enkindle in them the fervour for the perfect observance of the Rule and to enable them to suffer willingly every ill for the love of God. And when they must part they accompanied the brethren for a space on their way. Did any brother leave the congregation they were filled with great sorrow and continued for many days to pray for him. When any fell sick, the Father Guardian was the first to attend to his needs, and all the brethren had towards him so much tenderness and charity that no loving mother was more solicitous for her sons than these servants of God were for their sick brethren. Such was the gladness they found in their charity towards each other . . . that their loving companionship with each other was more delightful to them than the good feeding and clothing and show which abound in other Orders. Sometimes when there was but little food in the house they would offer it one to another and say : ' take it, you need more food, you need it more than I ; a little suffices me, but not you.' To which the other would reply : ' I am young and can suffer the more easily.' And often in this holy contention the morsels remained where they were, since each wished that the others should eat them."[12] It is a charming picture, revealing to us perhaps the secret of the endurance with which those first Capuchins braved both the rigour of their own manner of life and the dire persecution in which their Reform was bred.

(iii)

In the meantime whilst those pioneer Capuchins in the Marches of Ancona were pursuing their vocation simply but heroically, thinking not of vast schemes for the reformation of the Franciscan Order and the world at large, but of their

[12] cf. *I primi minori Cappuccini nel primo secolo dell' Ordine* in *l'Italia Francescana.* (Roma, 1927), *anno* ii, fasc. i, pp. 26-27, a hitherto unpublished manuscript of the sixteenth century, edited by P. Sisto da Pisa. O.M. Cap. It is mainly a transcript from Colpetrazzo. cf. Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, loc. cit.

own personal fidelity to the ideal poverty they loved, events were happening which were eventually to make the Capuchin Reform a world-wide organisation and influence, though as we shall see this goal was to be attained through much suffering and by unlooked-for paths.

It began with the resignation by Matteo da Bascio of the vicar-generalship within ten days of his election by the Chapter of Albacina.[13] Matteo had spent the days in visiting the four hermitages to encourage the friars in the hard life they had undertaken. But as each day went by, the responsibility of government had weighed upon him and he was restless to take up again the vagabond life of God's evangelist. Simply he told the friars, God willed him to be a wandering preacher ; there lay his vocation ; he was fitted for none other. So when he came to Fossombrone he handed over the government to Lodovico, the First Definitor, and again betook himself to the road.

Lodovico took over the reins with characteristic energy. Within a few months we find him in Rome armed with letters of introduction from the Duchess Caterina to a number of influential persons. Lodovico was aware that if the Capuchin Reform was to maintain itself against the unconcealed hostility of the Observants, it must be more than a mere local institution confined to the Marches of Ancona. If it was to live at all it must spread far and wide and Rome must be its centre. It is not improbable that some intuitive sense of Lodovico's far-reaching ambition for the new congregation—perhaps even some spoken communication on the subject—contributed to Fra Matteo's hasty resignation of the vicarship. Matteo sought for nothing but the freedom of the Franciscan life ; he had neither the will nor the temperament for the founding of an Order.

In his project to introduce the Reform into Rome, Lodovico had the whole-hearted sympathy of the Duchess Caterina. From her point of view it would be well that the friars should come directly under the eyes of the Pope ; their unworldly simplicity and their devoted labours for the people would surely gain them the Pontiff's esteem

[13] Chronica Johannis says he resigned after ten days, Mario da Mercato-Seraceno (*Narratione*, cart 98), " after a few days." Boverius, *Annales*, *anno* 1529, at the end of two months.

and protection. Caterina believed in the Capuchins and their power for good ; and she believed too that they had only to be known to win the respect of all who had the reform of the Church at heart. So when Lodovico set out, he carried with him letters of recommendation from the Duchess to her friends in Rome and to her uncle the Pope.

Lodovico's audience with the Pope was eminently satisfactory, at least to himself, for he was nominated Commissary-General of the Capuchins until such time as it should be expedient to hold a Chapter.[14] This direct nomination by the Pontiff gave Lodovico an authority practically independent of the controlling influence of his fellow definitors : in fact, from this time his rule was autocratic. He was fortunate, too, in finding friends amongst the governors of the hospital of San Giacomo—the great hospital for incurables. Two of the governors of the hospital were brothers of the Duchess of Camerino ; and its almoner, Lorenzo Vanozzi, had already befriended him on his visit to Rome three years previously. The result was that Lodovico was offered the little church of Santa Maria dei Miracoli with its adjoining presbytery which was in the gift of the governors, on condition that the friars should minister to the sick in the hospital. Thus was the first Capuchin settlement in Rome made.[15]

To staff the foundation, Lodovico brought friars from Colmenzone and Fossombrone ; and in a very short while their devotion to the sick and their austere simplicity of life won them the goodwill of the Roman people.

Then occurred one of those fortuitous happenings which not infrequently determine the course of human events. The Capuchins had hardly taken possession of the new house when Lodovico received a visit from a Fra Bernardino da Reggio, an Observant friar from Calabria, known to his intimates as " il Giorgio " from his family name.

[14] So says Boverius, following Bernardino da Colpetrazzo. But in the Act of Affiliation granted to the Calabrian Friars (vide *infra*, p. 61) Lodovico is described as *Vicarius-Generalis*.

[15] cf. P. Edouard d'Alençon : *Il primo convento dei Cappuccini in Roma* (Alençon, 1907) : *De Primordiis*, p. 66 ; *Tribulationes Ordinis FF. Min. Capuccinorum* (Romae, 1914), p. 5.

Boverius (*Annales*, 1529) attributes a large share to Vittoria Colonna in the settling of the Capuchins at Santa Maria dei Miracoli, but P. Edouard doubts this. He suggests that Vittoria Colonna's friendship for the Capuchins more probably began the year following at Naples.

Bernardino was a man with a somewhat remarkable history. He had taken his doctorate in theology at Paris but was also a man of letters in the wider sense. He had an unusual knowledge of Greek, which he spoke with fluency, and was much sought for at gatherings where philosophy and literature were debated. Yet on his return to his own religious province in Calabria, he had joined with some few friars in seeking to bring about a reform of the Order. About five years past, so Lodovico now learned, these Calabrian friars had been permitted to make an experiment in reform at the convent of the Santi Apostoli in Rome ;[16] but the experiment had failed and in 1526 they had returned to their own province, where they assumed the title of Recollets and lived an eremitical life under the jurisdiction of the Observant superiors, and with the approval of the Minister General, Quiñones.[17] But things were not going well, owing to the opposition of the general body of the Observants, and Fra Bernardino had come to Rome to seek protection for his brethren. In Rome he heard of Lodovico and the Capuchins and now came seeking information as to their life and prospects. Frequent consultations followed, which ended in a petition from Bernardino asking that he and his brethren might be affiliated to the Capuchin Reform. On August 16, a formal document was drawn up in the presence of a number of witnesses, by which Lodovico admitted the Recollets of Sant' Angelo in Calabria into the Capuchin family. Fra Bernardino thereupon returned with the document of affiliation to Calabria, where he was gladly received by his Recollet brethren ; and some of them straightway adopted the Capuchin habit and proclaimed their adherence to the new Reform. Yet as we shall see events were not to run smoothly and three years were to pass before the affiliation was finally consummated. But the meeting of Lodovico with Fra Bernardino marks a stage in the development of the

[16] The convent of the Dodici Apostoli was the headquarters of the Conventual friars. Did the Calabrian Recollets pass over to the Conventuals in the hope of a greater freedom to carry out their reform, as did the Capuchins in the Marches of Ancona and later the Alcantarines ? If so, on their return to Calabria they rejoined the Observants. Boverius (*Annales*, *anno* 1529, CV) erroneously states that the *Dodici Apostoli* was at this time under the jurisdiction of the Observants.

[17] See *Litterae P. Ludovici Rhegini*, edited by P. Edouard d'Alençon in *Tribulationes Ord. FF. Min. Cap.*, p. 62.

Reform.[18] Lodovico had now definitely embarked on his policy of establishing the Reform throughout the Italian provinces and even beyond. Nor did he shrink from the consequences of his avowed policy, which soon became evident. He at least had courage, even though as was afterward said, he was more adventurous than prudent. Others besides the Calabrians now sought to be associated with the new Reform. Not only in the Marches of Ancona but in Rome itself numbers of the Observants passed over to the Capuchins, and Lodovico welcomed the new-comers notwithstanding the protests of their superiors. And this was the beginning of new troubles which for many years were to mark with suffering the history of the Reform. Incidentally it brought the Capuchins into conflict with the recently elected Minister General, Paolo Pisotti, of sinister import in Franciscan history.

Indeed, of Paolo Pisotti no good word has been spoken either by the Observants or the Capuchins : or by any who have written of him. In the annals of the Observants his government has been regarded as one of disaster and ignominy.[19] Another Elias, some might say, recalling the reproaches cast at Elias by the persecuted brethren. But Pisotti was utterly without the ability of Elias. Ambitious and intriguing, he had not the one saving trait in Elias' character. Elias, however one may judge his policy, was ambitious for the glory of the Order : Pisotti's story reveals nothing nobler than personal ambition and low intrigue. Before his election as Minister General, whilst he was yet Commissary of the Cismontane Observants, he had manœuvred affairs in connexion with the Chapter to prevent the election of Antonio de Calcena who had been appointed Vicar when Quiñones was elevated to the cardinalate. His high-handed method in dealing with the Ultramontane branch of the Observants, was already a cause of discontent. No sooner was he elected than he sought to suppress the reform movement within the Observant family, thus reversing the policy of Quiñones who had encouraged it. Pisotti had no tolerance for reform of any sort whether within the

[18] cf. Boverius, *anno* 1529, where the document of affiliation is given—a copy of the document is in the Vatican Archives. cf. Langonio : *Regestum*, p. 23.

[19] cf. Wadding, *Annales*, *anno* 1529, *seq.*

general community or in eremitical seclusion ; and this perhaps more than his Italian partisanship aroused against him an active opposition ; this, and the shameless intrigue by which he sought to put his own partisans into office and thus secure his own power. Not all who arose at last against Pisotti were zealots for reform. Even amongst the Italians were not a few with no sympathy for the reform movement, who regarded his rule as destructive of the community and resented his double-dealing by which he sought merely his own personal ends.[20] The manner of his official visitation of the provinces in Southern Italy came as a shock to all but the most lax amongst the friars. His visitation was more like a royal progress, it was said, than the coming of a humble son of St. Francis. He was met at his entrance into the cities by the civic authorities and welcomed with fanfares and the salute of guns : in his train walked ecclesiastical and civic dignitaries. Banquets and ceremonial marked his stay. Within three years, so strong had grown the opposition to his rule that both the Cardinal Protector of the Order and Quiñones, the late Minister General, found it necessary to remonstrate with him, in particular as regarded his persecution of the reformed communities and his repression of any attempt whatever at reform within the Order. Whereupon Pisotti in alarm wrote public letters to the Ministers Provincial ordering that the friars of the reforms under his jurisdiction should not be disturbed ; but at the same time he sent private letters to certain of the Ministers telling them they could use their own discretion as to the publishing of the public letters. In 1533, at the instance of the Ultramontane Ministers, the Pope, Clement VII, demanded his resignation ; but by that time the Observant family had come near the brink of ruin, so deep and widespread was the discontent ; whilst many who in this year 1529 were working against the Capuchins had come to see in them the saviours of the Franciscan Order. Such was the Minister General Pisotti with whom Lodovico had now to contend.

For the Capuchins personally, Pisotti had nothing but

[20] See the hitherto unpublished documents concerning the scandal of his dealings with the Venetian Observants edited by P. Edouard d'Alençon in *Gian Pietro Caraffa, Vescovo di Chieti (Paolo IV) e la Riforma nell' ordine dei Minori dell' Osservanza. Documenti inediti.* (Foligno, 1912.)

contempt. Their uncouth dress and bare, mean dwellings, their inordinate austerity of life, seemed to him hardly human. They offended his taste as well as his principles.

Not at once did he apply to the Pope for their direct suppression. Rumour spread abroad, whether with his connivance or not is not known, that these reformers were not all they professed to be : they were little more than vagabonds restless under the yoke of obedience, unable to bend themselves to the well-ordered life of the community. Under a guise of excessive austerity, it was said, they cloaked a life that would not bear too close a scrutiny. And so singular was the unworldly simplicity of the Capuchins at a time when simplicity was of little account, that not a few listened to the insinuations and grew suspicious. Even in the Papal entourage many felt that the Pope had been duped into lending encouragement to Lodovico and his associates. Such was the trend of feeling when towards the end of the year Pisotti obtained from the Holy See a brief which he undoubtedly purposed to use against the Capuchins, though the brief did not mention them by name. In general terms the brief denounces certain friars of the Observance who, led astray by the seductions of the ancient enemy and tired of the life of penance, have procured exemptions from the obedience due to their ordinary superiors through friends resident at the Roman Court, and, that they might live free from correction, have placed themselves under the protection of the diocesan ordinary or the Master General of the Conventuals. These friars, the brief continues, go wandering about alone and without a companion ; they are not ashamed even to visit inns and other places not becoming to religious persons. Wherefore, to obviate the manifest danger to religion, the brief annuls all and every apostolic rescript, even letters given under the Fisherman's seal, by which exemptions from the ordinary jurisdiction of superiors have been granted or permissions given to found some new sect or manner of life or to erect houses or congregations against the will of the Minister General or his commissaries. Moreover, it is strictly forbidden to introduce into the Order new sects, or to assume any other name or title other than that which Saint Francis himself obtained from the Holy See. The brief, as we have said, did not name the

Capuchins. At first sight it might seem to be directed against those wandering friars—and they were not a few—who for no other purpose than their own pleasure, bought exemptions from community life, chiefly through the Grand Penitentiary. But it was so worded as to include all and every friar who, for any reason however laudable, had obtained exemptions from the ordinary common life : it might be applied to the Riformati, the Discalceati and the Capuchins ; and in fact Pisotti very soon made it clear that he intended so to interpret it. In a letter addressed to certain of the Provincials, he explicitly stated that the reformed communities were now suppressed, and that the friars of these communities must return to the general community.[22]

Pisotti next obtained a Papal brief, dated May 15, 1530, directed explicitly against Lodovico, the Vicar-General of the Capuchins, Bernardino da Reggio the leader of the Calabrians and their associates. In this brief, all apostolic concessions granted to the friars named were annulled, and the Minister General was empowered to recall them to the Observant communities from which they had separated, where they must live under the jurisdiction of their ordinary superiors.[23] On the face of it, this brief suppressed and dissolved the Capuchin congregation. Yet the Capuchins were not suppressed. Lodovico, it is said, whilst recognising in the brief a severe check to the Reform, would not acknowledge that the brief annulled the bull *Religionis Zelus* by which the Capuchin Reform was canonically constituted, on the ground that this bull was not expressly mentioned in the new brief. It was perhaps a lawyer's interpretation. Lodovico undoubtedly had friends at court ; and, considering the campaign of misrepresentation and intrigue which was working

[22] cf. Wadding, *anno* 1529, xxxiv. That Pisotti designed to use the brief to suppress all reforms is clear from a note in his Register, June 3, 1530 (quoted by Wadding, *anno* 1530, xv) in which Pisotti declares that in virtue of two briefs he has received from the Pope the Reformati are suppressed and that the Pope does not wish there should be any new reforms, whether already started or to be started. The only two briefs Pisotti had received at this time were the brief of Dec. 29, 1529, and another to which we shall refer, dated May 15, 1530.

The only other document referring to these events discovered by Pastor in the Secret Archives of the Vatican is a command issued to the Superiors of the Observants to receive back those friars who had left their communities. It is dated May 27, 1530 (cf. Pastor, vol. x, p. 472).

[23] Bullar, *Ord. Cap. I.* Wadding, *Annales, anno* 1530, xvi.

to bring about the dissolution of the Capuchin congregation, who will blame Lodovico if he availed himself of legal advice to save his company? In truth events justified his action. It is evident from the contradictory nature of the briefs issued by Clement VII during the next three years that the Pope, urged on the one side by the partisans of Pisotti and on the other side by the friends of the Capuchins, was a prey to that indecision which marred the work of his pontificate and was the despair of his wisest counsellors. One thing is clear. The brief of May 15 remained ineffective, nor was it taken seriously by any but Pisotti's own party, notwithstanding that on May 27 a second brief was issued confirming the first. So lightly was it taken that the Cardinal Protector of the Franciscan Order allowed the Capuchins to make a new settlement in Rome at Sant' Eufemia, on the Esquiline Hill. Cardinal Vincenzo Caraffa, Archbishop of Naples, received them into his cathedral and made over to them a house; elsewhere too, they were welcomed by ecclesiastical authorities. One striking fact in regard to the brief of May 15 is its misstatement of the actual status at that time enjoyed by the Capuchins. According to the preamble of the brief, the Capuchins are still members of the Observant family *who for a time* have been allowed to live separated from the community: they still have the right to seek hospitality in the Observant houses and there to be treated as the other brethren; and they are at liberty to return to the Observant community whenever they please. The brief ignores the fact that by the bull *Religionis Zelus* the Capuchins were juridically affiliated to the Conventuals. Moreover, in stating that they had been permitted to live in hermitages, it adds the clause "habitu tamen regulari retinentes"—by which evidently was meant that they were supposed to wear the ordinary Observant habit. In view of these misstatements, the friends of the Capuchins might well hold that the brief was obtained by a fraudulent perversion of the truth and that the Capuchins were not obliged to accept it as final until the true facts of the case had been again submitted to the Holy See. Nineteen months later the brief of May 15 was again republished with an intimation that the previous letters had been without effect: [24] a strange case if the

[24] Wadding, *Annales*, *anno* 1531, v.

Pope had deliberately determined to suppress the Capuchins. Nor did this republication of the brief bring the Capuchin Reform to an end. The probable truth is that the Pope was himself hardly aware of the full import of the briefs issued in his name. Immersed in political affairs, this contention amongst the Franciscans would seem to him of small moment, an irritating diversion, when brought to his notice. His attitude gave an opportunity for intrigue which Paolo Pisotti would make the most of.

There was another, however, who viewed the situation as regards the Capuchins and the Observants from another and more worthy standpoint than did Paolo Pisotti, and that was Cardinal Quiñones, the late Minister General. As has been said, Quiñones was in favour of the Reform movement within the Observant family. He himself had belonged to the reforming party in Spain, later known as the Discalceati, and as Minister General he had encouraged the Calabrian Recollets who were now the butt of Pisotti's anger. But Quiñones was utterly opposed to the Capuchin Reform in so far as it claimed independence of the Observant jurisdiction. He now intervened with a programme of "seven chapters" with which he hoped to bring about a settlement.[25] Unfortunately for our story no document remains to inform us authentically what the "seven chapters" were. We can only infer from his known general policy that he favoured the establishment of "houses of recollection" in which the friars would be free to observe the Franciscan Rule more strictly, and that this freedom should be guaranteed by special legal decrees. Given the freedom for a stricter observance, the Capuchins were again to be incorporated into the Observant family and be under the direct jurisdiction of the Minister General. This was in fact the solution for which the Observants later on contended. Meanwhile Pisotti was Minister General, and whatever chance of acceptance Quiñones' programme might have had at this moment was lost by the time a new Minister General appears on the scene. For events now moved quickly under Pisotti's rule to render reunion practically impossible.

[25] See the petition of Honorius Cajani, Procurator of the Observants, in *De Primordiis*, p. 104. cf. *infra*, p. 73.

(iv)

And first there were his dealings with the Calabrian Recollets who unconsciously to themselves were now to play no small part in the story of the new Reform, to which they were not as yet actually affiliated. In regard to them, at least, Pisotti's judgment was correct: if the Calabrians united with the Capuchins, who could tell how far the Observant revolt might spread? And on that one point, Quiñones probably agreed with the Minister General. We will now follow the course of the Calabrian revolt.

Fra Bernardino da Reggio, the emissary of the Calabrian Recollets, had, as we have seen, returned to Calabria after his meeting with the Commissary General Lodovico with the intention of bringing about a union between the Recollets and Capuchins. On his way back he had broken his journey at Naples to obtain the necessary licence of the Spanish Viceroy.[26] Thus the Capuchin Reform became known in the capital of the Neapolitan kingdom. Perhaps it was through Fra Bernardino, perhaps through her friend Vittoria Colonna who was well acquainted with the Duchess Caterina, that the lady Maria Longa first heard of the Reform. Maria Longa, a lady of Spanish birth, was the widow of a high official in the Neapolitan Chancery. Since her husband's death she had devoted herself to works of charity and had founded a hospital for incurables, where she and some ladies associated with her gave themselves to the service of the sick. Whether it was at her invitation that Lodovico sent friars to make a Capuchin Settlement in Naples in the following year 1530, we know not; but it was she who received the friars on their arrival and entertained them until a house was procured for them with the approval of the Archbishop, Cardinal Vincenzo Caraffa.

Meanwhile Paolo Pisotti had been active to thwart the design of Fra Bernardino and his Recollets and had fulminated against them the decree of excommunication con-

[26] See the letter of Cardinal Pompei Colonna, Vice-Chancellor of the Neapolitan Kingdom, allowing the introduction of the Capuchins into Naples, dated September 26, 1529, in *De Primordiis*, pp. 80-81. For a critical examination of the documents relating to the Calabrian friars, cf. *ibid.* p. 67, *seq.*

tained in the Papal briefs to which we have referred, unless they should at once submit themselves to the Observant superiors and return to the common life. Even now a conciliatory attitude on the part of the superiors might have induced the Recollets to remain within the Observant jurisdiction : but Pisotti, unlike Quiñones, was not for conciliation but for repression ; and the Recollets were treated as traitors to their order and made to suffer.

Matters came to a head in the summer of 1532. Paolo Pisotti had been present at the General Chapter held at Messina at the end of April. From Messina he went to preside at the Provincial Chapter held at Scilliano in Calabria on the feast of Pentecost. Of the affair of this Chapter, two apparently contradictory accounts have come down to us. According to one, Fra Bernardino da Reggio and Fra Lodovico da Reggio, the leaders of the Recollets, applied to the Chapter for permission to migrate, the one to the Conventuals, the other to the Capuchins. Pisotti, so the account runs, granted their petition, though it was with an ill grace that he allowed Lodovico da Reggio to join the Capuchins.[27] It is difficult to accept this story in view of Pisotti's action on his return to Rome. More illuminative is the account given by one who was a party to the fray. He tells us that at the time of the General Chapter, Bernardino and Lodovico da Reggio went to Messina, as representing the Recollets, to petition for leave to join the Capuchins : not that they had any hope that their petition would be granted, but to comply with the law which required religious to ask their superiors' consent before migrating to another Order. Pisotti received them courteously, listened to what they had to say, but would give no immediate decision. He bade them apply to the Provincial Chapter shortly to be held in their province at which he himself would preside. He did not, however, let them go at that. He kept them in conversation and as an inducement to them to reconsider their petition he held out the promise that they should be promoted to the office of guardian.[28] At this point the story reveals Pisotti as the same unscrupulous

[27] Wadding, *Annales*, *anno* 1532.

[28] A guardian in the Franciscan Order is the superior of a canonically established friary.

intriguer who played false with the Observants of the Venetian province. It was a bait to win their submission and at the same time to attach them to his own party. The Recollets, however, were not deceived either by his courtesy or his flattery. With Bernardino and Lodovico it was a suggestion to sell their souls for a mess of pottage ; and they knew what their refusal would mean.

The Provincial Chapter was held at Pentecost in the friary of Scilliano. The Recollets sent in their petition in writing ; but the friars who presented it were so violently upbraided that, fearing for their lives, they turned and fled.

Whereupon Lodovico da Reggio straightway had recourse to the Duke of Nocera, who readily took the Recollets under his protection and promised to assist their cause at the court of Rome. At his invitation the Recollets now gathered together at the Duke's residence at Filogasio. They were thirty in number. On the Tuesday after Trinity Sunday they met in the church of the Dominicans to hold a chapter of their own and Lodovico was elected Vicar Provincial. They appeared in the Chapter wearing the Capuchin hood sewn to their Observant habits, since they "were as yet unable to obtain the coarser cloth "—and thus they passed into the Capuchin Reform.[29]

The Chapter concluded, Lodovico, the newly-elected Provincial, sent some of his friars to the hermitage of Sant' Elia in Galatri, a secluded spot in the mountains, whilst with the others he made a settlement at Sant' Antonio in the

[29] *Chronica Johannis Romaei*, loc. cit., p. 150 ; Mario da Mercato-Seraceno, *Narratione*, cart. 200 *seq.* Johannis Romaeus was himself one of the Recollets ; from him Mario received his information concerning the Calabrian friars. cf. *De Primordiis*, 95, *seq.*

P. Edouard d'Alençon holds that Wadding's story is reconcilable with that of the Calabrian chronicler. He accepts Wadding's statement that Pisotti granted the petitions of Fra Bernardino and Lodovico. In this case Bernardino's petition to join the Conventuals would be explained by the fact that the Capuchins were nominally subject to the Conventuals. But the learned critic suggests that Pisotti was playing a double game. By granting the petition he would ingratiate himself with the Duke of Nocera, the friend of the Recollets, who had entertained him in princely fashion at Messina ; whilst on his return to Rome he could get the concession annulled by the Pope in accordance with recent briefs. Lodovico da Reggio, according to P. Edouard, did not trust Pisotti ; hence his recourse to the Duke of Nocera for protection. Wadding speaks of the " upbraidings " which accompanied the concession—and so links up his story with that of Johannes Romaeus. The suggested reconciliation of the two stories is not improbable; it accords with Pisotti's usual method of government.

neighbourhood of Filogasio : and for awhile they dwelt in peace. But early in July their peace was violently broken. On July 3, at the instance of Paolo Pisotti a Papal decree of excommunication was hurled against Bernardino and Lodovico da Reggio and their associates. The local bishops were ordered under pain of suspension *a divinis* to enforce the sentence and if necessary to hand over the recalcitrants to the secular arm ; and the Viceroy of Naples, the Duke of Nocera, " and all other princes and temporal lords " were required to assist in enforcing the sentence.[30]

A few days later a body of Observants appeared at the ducal palace in Filogasio to promulgate the sentence of excommunication and demand the bodies of the apostates, threatening the Duke with excommunication should he continue to favour and protect them. The Duke, good Catholic as he was, tartly retorted : "By the life of Don Tiberio[31] I will quickly make him run who shall dare notify me of any such excommunication." As to the excommunicated friars, he demanded why they should be prevented from observing the Rule they had vowed to observe ? He certainly would not judge them guilty till they had been heard in their own defence. Lodovico and Bernardino were consequently sent for.

Bernardino with some companions, amongst them the narrator of the story, had already sought refuge in the palace : Lodovico was found at prayer in a wood. Faced with their accusers, who charged them with leaving the community without cause, Lodovico in the name of his brethren related how the rule of poverty was not observed in the communities ; contrary to the Rule as interpreted by Clement V, the Observants exercised legal rights over the property given for their use ; they were no longer clothed in coarse garments ; they received money, and instead of trusting to the voluntary alms of the faithful received on the quest, they built granaries and cellars for the storing of goods. The delegates of the Observants could not deny the

[30] Archiv. Vatican. Arm. XL, vol. 23, Epist. 184, Minute dei Brevi di Clemente VII ; *ibid.* Arm. XXXIX, vol. 12, Brevi di Clemente VII, *anno* IX, loin II, num. 185—edited in *De Primordiis*, pp. 99-100.

[31] Don Tiberio was the youngest of the five sons of the Duke. He was destined for the ecclesiastical career.

accusation and left the palace without daring to declare the excommunication. Nevertheless some of the Recollets who had passed over to the Capuchins, fearing the excommunication, returned to the Observant family.[32]

But the Duke of Nocera straightway despatched an envoy to the Pope to make known to His Holiness the true state of the case and the reasons which had led the Recollets to pass over to the new Reform.[33] The Duke's intervention, as we shall see, had far-reaching results.

The story now moves to Rome.

Sometime during the summer, Padre Honorio da Cajano, the recently-elected Procurator of the Observants, presented a petition to His Holiness, praying that the Capuchin congregation should be suppressed.[34] Honorio, on his election, had come to Rome from Tuscany where as yet the Capuchins were unknown. His information concerning the Reform was therefore gained by hearsay amongst the Capuchins' opponents. That perhaps accounts for the perversions of historical truth in his statement of how the Reform came into existence. His petition is a naïve document—one of several such that from time to time were addressed to the Holy See by well-meaning friars of the Observant family.[35] But Honorio was Procurator of the Order and his personal petition would have more weight. He begins by declaring that he had heard the truth concerning these Capuchins from many persons; yet he does not even know when the Reform first began: it was, he says, "nine or ten years past," though, as he regards Lodovico da Fossombrone as the instigator of the movement, it was but six years. These Capuchins receive "our friars" without any authorisation and delude many "simple brethren" by declaring that

[32] "Ita qui antea eramus triginta vix quindecim perseveravimus."—*Chron. Johannis Romaei*, loc. cit., p. 152. The incident is typical of the methods which at this period were bringing the authority of the Holy See into disrepute and arousing the temporal princes to resist the injunctions of the Roman Court.

[33] Johannes Romaeus says simply the Duke sent "an abbot," or "the abbot"—not improbably the envoy was the Duke's son, Don Francesco. Boverius says the Duke sent Don Tiberio, but Tiberio at this date was a mere boy. cf. *De Primordiis*, p. 102, note 4. See the account in Mario da Mercato-Seraceno, *Descrizione*, loc. cit., p. 40, *seq.*

[34] The letter is in the Vatican Archives, *Lettere dei Principi*, vol. 7, f. 658—cf. *De Primordiis*, pp. 103-104.

[35] See the letter of Fra Cherubino Lusio, in P. Tacchi Venturi: *Studi e Documenti* (Romæ 1901), p. 163.

they have a bull of the tenor of the bull of Eugenius IV.[36] The head of these brethren should therefore be punished severely and all these brethren who have passed from the Observants should be considered as excommunicate, since they are without lawful superiors. Wherefore His Holiness should enforce "the seven chapters" ordained by the Cardinal of Santa Croce[37] (Quiñones). The petition concludes: "For the rest Your Holiness will hear more tomorrow by word of mouth from the Venerable Protector[38] and the most reverend cardinal of Santa Croce." It was perhaps well that the Duke of Nocera had sent his envoy to plead the cause of the Calabrian Capuchins. Moved by petitions on both sides, the Pope appointed a commission of two cardinals, del Monte and delle Valle, to judge between the two parties. Their decision was given formally on 14th August: the Capuchins were forbidden to receive any more Observants, but the Minister General was admonished to cease his persecution of the Observants who had already become Capuchins and to leave the new congregation in peace.[39] It was a tame decision which avoided the real point at issue as it presented itself to both the Observants and the Capuchins: namely, the freedom of the Observants who so desired to pass over to a stricter congregation in accordance with the common law of the Church. It really settled nothing as this story will show.

Meanwhile, with the approval of Cardinal del Monte, protector of the city of Montepulciano in Tuscany, a community of Reformed Conventuals had made over their hermitage in that city to the new Reform, and themselves became Capuchins.[41]

Paolo Pisotti left Rome about the time the Cardinals'

[36] In fact the bull *Religionis Zelus* did reproduce the essential concessions granted to the Observants by Eugenius IV in the bull *Ut Sacra Ordinis* of January 11, 1446. As regards their reception of Observants, the Capuchins were justified by their communication in all the privileges of the Camaldolese hermits.

[37] Vide *supra*.

[38] Cardinal Andrea delle Valle.

[39] Wadding, *Annales*, *anno* 1532, XXXII; Boverius, *Annales*, *anno* 1532, LXVIII.

[41] cf. P. Sisto da Pisa: *Storia dei Cappuccini Toscani* (Firenze, 1906), vol. i, pp. 34–35. The hermitage belonged to the commune; hence the recourse to Card. del Monte.

decision was given, to make a visitation of the French provinces. The clouds were already lowering upon him. Earlier in the year, before the General Chapter at Messina, Gian Pietro Caraffa, the Papal visitor to the Franciscans in Venice, had suggested the deposition of Paolo Pisotti ; but Pisotti had seen to it that his party should be in the ascendant and the Chapter confirmed him in his office. But from all parts complaints were reaching Rome of his misrule and of his persecution of the reformed communities ; and in many of the provinces of Italy the more zealous brethren were driven nigh to the point of revolt. The affair of the Observants in Venice is a case in point. It is not a savoury business, but it throws light on events which are to follow.

The beginning of this trouble was in 1527. The Minister General Quiñones, being employed by the Pope in political affairs, had given Pisotti, then Commissary General of the Italian Observants, enlarged powers usually reserved to the Minister General ; such as the power to deprive friars of their vote in the chapters and to quash elections. Pisotti was not scrupulous as to the lawful use of his powers ; nor was he scrupulous in his use of men. The ambition of certain friars in the province of Venice lent itself to his scheme of packing the superiorships in the Order with creatures of his own making, on whose support he might count at the next General Chapter. In 1527 the Provincial Chapter of Venice elected as Provincial Fra Nicola Malpiero ; whereupon a friar unnamed, having first falsified the letter of the Minister General convoking the Chapter, appealed to Pisotti on the ground that the Chapter had been held without the Minister General's sanction. Pisotti straightway deprived the newly elected Provincial and the guardians and convoked a new Chapter, at which Fra Girolamo Recalco was elected Provincial. Thereupon Malpiero and the deprived guardians appealed to the Pope, who ordered an inquiry to be made. Pisotti, however, obtained a revocation of the Papal brief. When, by the manipulation of the Provincial Chapters, Pisotti was elected Minister General in 1529 he issued a definitiorial decree depriving Malpiero and the guardians who had appealed against him of all their legal rights, unless it should please the General to relax the penalty. Malpiero was disconsolate ; but he found an unexpected

friend in Fra Raffaele Bordinale, hitherto his opponent. Bordinale, who had taken with him to the Genèral Chapter one thousand ducats for the building of a church, had come to an agreement with Pisotti by which it was agreed that at the next Provincial Chapter Malpiero should be elected Provincial Minister, provided that he agreed to resign the Provincialate at the end of one year in favour of Bordinale or his colleague Fra Antonio, surnamed il Storto.

The Chapter was held in 1530 at Piove de Sacco and Pisotti sent a commissary, Fra Bernardino Ochino da Siena, to preside at the Chapter and secure the election of Malpiero. Further, only those friars were to be elected guardians whose names were on a list supplied by Pisotti. The " God-fearing " brethren in the Chapter protested strongly against this tampering with the freedom of election, but Ochino as strongly insisted that it was the General's will, and eventually Malpiero was elected. But when, at the end of the year, the other parties to the arrangement demanded Malpiero's resignation, he blandly informed them that he was no party to any such scheme. Thereupon Pisotti took matters into his own hands and sent Bernardino Ochino to Venice to convoke a new Chapter. The Chapter was to be held without delay, for Pisotti had received news that, in consequence of complaints sent by Giberti, the Bishop of Verona, and the Senate of Venice concerning the persecution of " the reforming brethren," the Pope was about to appoint a Papal visitor to enquire into the affairs of the Venetian province. In fact, letters had been sent to the Bishop of Verona commanding Gian Pietro Caraffa either personally or by deputy to hold an enquiry before any new Chapter should be held. But the Chapter, to Caraffa's surprise, was already in session at Cittadella when Caraffa received the Papal letters. Unable to attend the Chapter himself, owing to illness, Caraffa sent as his deputy the titular Bishop of Ceos, himself a Franciscan ; but by the time he arrived Antonio " il Storto " had been elected Provincial, and Raffaele Bordinale, custos : Ochino insisting on these elections in spite of protests from many of the friars present. On the conclusion of the Chapter, Ochino interviewed Bishop Giberti at Verona and wrote to Caraffa at Venice, offering explanations. Caraffa at least was not deceived, and it was now that he

expressed the hope that Pisotti should be deposed at the General Congregation of the Order to be held at Messina the following year. In a report he sent to the Pope he did not hide the seriousness of the situation which had arisen.

To the Venetian brethren who were anxious for reform the situation indeed seemed almost hopeless. One of them, Fra Bonaventura, whose uprightness and zeal had won Caraffa's respect, wished to go at once to the Pope and make a personal appeal on behalf of brethren zealous for a stricter observance of the Rule : but Caraffa deemed it wiser to delay ; he knew the Roman Court and the intrigues with which it was beset. But the affair of the Venetian Chapters was to play no small part in the eventual downfall of Paolo Pisotti and the revival of the religious spirit amongst the Observants, and also in the development of the Capuchin Reform. For one thing it was not an isolated instance of Pisotti's rule ; it was typical of what was taking place, though less blatantly, in other provinces of Italy,[42] but the intervention of Gian Pietro Caraffa and the Bishop of Verona brought it more manifestly into the public eye.

It was under such circumstances that during the following year it became more and more evident to the Observants who were zealous for reform that some instant action must be taken if the Reform movement was not to be quenched and dissipated. Pisotti's confirmation in office at the General Congregation held at Messina, packed as it was with his partisans, only deepened the gloom. And now, too, the reforming party, anxious to maintain the unity of the Observant family, were alarmed at the action taken by the Calabrian reformers in going over to the Capuchins.

A letter, already referred to, written by Caraffa to Fra Bonaventura at the end of the summer of 1532, is illuminating. It is not improbable that Bonaventura was already in active negotiation with the leaders of the Reform movement in other provinces. Like these he was anxious to preserve the unity of the Observants whilst pressing for reform. Caraffa writes bewailing the fact that owing to the number of worthless brethren (*cattivi frati*) the Observant family is not as it should be. Two measures, he says, are needful if the Order is to be saved from ruin ; the Pope must see that the

[42] Vittoria Colonna.

Order is strictly governed according to its constitutions and not permit infractions of the constitutional government by way of Papal briefs ; and provision must be made for the few friars (*pochi frati*) who wish to observe the Rule they have vowed. Some will say : why not reform the whole Order ? " I reply," wrote Caraffa, " that with such a multitude of wretched subjects (*pessimi subietti*), it is impossible. If it is objected that to separate the good from the bad is to ruin the Order, I certainly do not intend that. But if it is said that the unity of the Order demands uniformity of observance (*unius moris in unum*) it is also written as a trait of true religious : ' there was in them one heart and one soul.' But this is not so with the Observants of to-day. Hence it is necessary that His Holiness should make regulations for the few good brethren that they may be free to walk in the stricter path, as did Pope Eugenius IV and as has been recently done in Spain and Portugal ;[43] and that places be assigned to these brethren which shall be to them cities of refuge where they can observe the Rule. But such relief must come from the Holy See, not from the General or the General Chapter ; for it is known that friars wishing to observe the Rule strictly have been dispersed amongst the unreformed and treated as fools, so that it has come to pass that many wishful to live well feel that ' it is vain to serve the Lord ' and become demoralised (*pazzi*) and downhearted." Fra Bonaventura was at length setting out for Rome when he received this letter from Caraffa, and it was intended that he should use the letter in his appeal to the Pope.

And now we enter on a new stage in the march of events as concerns this history.

Fra Bonaventura was not the only friar who had come to Rome after Pisotti's departure for France, with the purpose of seeking relief from the Holy See. There he found himself, for instance, in comradeship with Fra Francesco da Jesi, a delegate from the Reform party in the province of the Marches, and with Fra Stefano da Molina, a zealous propagator of reform, and his fellow-worker in the same cause, Fra Bernardino d'Asti : brethren of some repute not only for learning and the gift of administration but for their evident

[43] A reference to the Discalceati Franciscans.

holiness of life. Stefano and Bernardino had long been identified with the movement to establish "houses of recollection" such as had been founded in Spain at the end of the last century with the approval of the Minister General Francesco Lichetti; they had in 1519 established one such house at Fonte Colombo in the valley of Rieti, where they and their associates lived in strictest poverty according to the mind of St. Francis.[44] Bernardino d'Asti had more than once been Provincial of the Roman province; he was a sagacious administrator and a born leader, yet withal the humblest and gentlest of men. The Reform movement both in the Roman province and elsewhere had had a chequered career, alternately favoured and discouraged by successive Ministers General: but never before had the times been so critical as under Paolo Pisotti. So in the autumn of 1532 we find a determined group of Reform leaders in Rome, intent on seeking that intervention of the Holy See which Caraffa considered the only remedy if the whole Order was to be saved from ruin. We may take it that Cardinal Quiñones gave them his support at the Papal Court.

On November 2, Fra Bonaventura wrote gleefully to Caraffa that things were going well for the cause of reform. One significant passage in his letter refers to the Capuchins: "Our Lord the Pope will leave but few friars with Lodovico of the Marches on condition that they receive no new houses nor admit any novices. Some of the Capuchins have returned to the Observance. The Procurator is taking steps for the speedy issue of the apostolic bull by which it will be ordained that these Capuchins who have returned to the fold and the older brethren who desire to observe the Rule to the letter shall have four or five places or more assigned them under their own superiors; and a beautiful code of regulations from which much good may come, so that none shall have cause to separate by reason that they are not given the opportunity to live well."[45]

On November 16, the much-desired bull was published.[46]

[44] cf. Diomede (Card.) Falconio: *I Minori Reformati negli Abruzzi* (Roma, 1913) and Benedetto Spila: *Memorie Storiche della Provincia Riformata Romana* (Roma, 1890) for an account of these early beginnings of the Riformati movement.

[45] *Gian Pietro Caraffa*, op. cit., pp. 33-34.

[46] *In Suprema*—Wadding, *Annales, anno* 1532, XXII. Boverius: *Regestum: Annal.* I, p. 988.

It decreed that since certain brethren of the Observance desired to observe the Rule purely and simply to the letter and in accordance with the declarations of Nicholas III and Clement V, they are not to be prevented from their laudable purpose ; and to give them the necessary freedom four or five houses shall be set apart in each province ; and these houses shall be as near each other as possible. The houses are to be devoid of all superfluous ornament and only what is necessary and useful shall be retained in them ; and neither the General nor the Provincial Ministers shall put any obstacle in the way of a strict observance such as these friars desire. Moreover, the friars in these houses are to be governed by superiors chosen by themselves, subject only to confirmation by the General or Provincial Ministers, who moreover retain the right to punish delinquents.

In such wise was the charter given for the establishment of the Reform within the Observant family.

Fra Bonaventura left Rome happy ; the day had at last dawned for which he and not a few of the brethren had long prayed. But his happiness was quickly cut short. Soon he learned that Fra Francesco da Jesi and his companion, Fra Illuminato, on their return to the province of the Marches with the bull of reform, had been promptly cast into prison by the brethren of the community. Then came news that the Papal Commissary who was to publish the bull in Venice would not be sent, owing to the opposition of the superiors of that province. Finally, early in June came the direct news that the Pope had suspended the operation of the bull until the next General Chapter to be held in 1535.[47]

For awhile the party of reform were stunned, and gradually many amongst both the leaders and their followers confessed the hopelessness of their position. Doubtless they had counted much on the support of Cardinal Quiñones ; yet even he could not save them in the face of the active opposition of the dominant party within the Order and the lethargy of the body at large. Fra Bonaventura retired with a companion to a small house in the city, given him by the Venetians, and there for many years he lived a hermit's life and served the little church of Santa Maria degli Angeli,

47 cf. *Gian Pietro Caraffa*, op. cit., p. 35. *De Primordiis*, p. 114.

under the jurisdiction of the diocesan ordinary. Stefano de Molina went back to his hermitage of Fonte Colombo, patient in his pain. But others now felt they were at the parting of the ways ; nor did the enforced resignation of Paolo Pisotti, towards the end of July, lighten their gloom.[48] Pisotti's misrule, they felt, had been rendered possible because of the active or passive support he received from the community as a whole ; nor could they any longer hope for the freedom they yearned for, to live as their conscience bade them, so long as they were at the mercy of the unreformed community. They had blamed the Capuchins for separating from the unity of the Order : now they recognised that the Capuchins had taken the only course by which freedom could be gained. Thus it came about that in the early days of 1534 a number of the most active leaders of the Reform party with not a few of their followers went over to the Capuchins.[49]

Amongst these Observants who now migrated to the Capuchins were three of the most active leaders of the Reform movement, Bernardino d'Asti, Francesco da Jesi and that Giovanni da Fano whom we have met with in the earlier pages of this history : men who had been looked to as the strong pillars of the Reform movement. To the Capuchin Reform the migration was momentous in its consequences : it introduced into the small congregation a new element of strength ; for these men were of a tried character and outstanding ability, and reputed amongst the most upright in the Order. Moreover, outside the Order they were held in reverence and esteem as notable preachers and sagacious counsellors. But to the surprise of many, Fra Bernardino Ochino, who had played so sinister a part in the affair of the Venetian Chapters, now too went over to the Capuchins. Some said he went over in chagrin since at the General congregation of the Order at which Paolo Pisotti had been deposed, he had failed to secure election as Commissary General of the Italian Observants.[50] Others, it would seem, regarded his act in the light of a genuine conversion. He

[48] Wadding, *Annales*, *anno* 1533,

[49] Wadding, *Annales*, *anno* 1534.

[50] cf. Ferero e Muller : *Carteggio di Vittoria Colonna* (Turin, 1889), Epist. lxxi, p. 118.

had been Provincial of Siena, and one of the most popular preachers in Italy.

It was, however, the passing over of Giovanni da Fano which touched the hearts of the Capuchins themselves most closely. To them he was another Saul become Paul; and doubtless to many others his migration was the strongest testimony in favour of the young Reform. Giovanni's change of mind was due to no sudden impulse. When he laid down the office of Provincial of the Marches in 1527 he continued active in promoting the Reform movement in his province.[52] In 1532 he obtained permission to become a wandering preacher and with a band of associates journeyed through Italy preaching the word of God as the spirit impelled him, even as Matteo da Bascio and the wandering Capuchin preachers were doing.[53] With deep humility he came at last to Lodovico da Fossombrone, confessing with tears his former harshness and praying to be forgiven and to be admitted into the Capuchin Reform. Ever afterwards a tender humility was apparent in all his intercourse with the brethren.

To the body of the Observants the secession of these men seemed to threaten the collapse of the Observant family; and the Vicar General, Leonardo Pubbicio,[54] in conjunction with Cardinal Quiñones at once took active measures to save the situation. Their purpose was to bring about the suppression of the Capuchins which had already been decided upon in the negotiations of the previous year. And in truth they came near to achieving their purpose. They had a powerful ally in Honorio Cajano, the Procurator, whom Clement VII had chosen as his confessor. On April 15, 1534 the blow fell in a rescript addressed to Cardinal della Valle ordering him to admonish all Capuchins who had passed from the Observant communities to return to these communities under pain of excommunication and abide under the obedience of the Observant superiors. It meant the practical suppression of the congregation, since

[52] He is said to have been the first custos of the Riformati in the province of the Marches. cf. Alessio d'Arquata: *Cronica della riformata provincia dei Minori della Marca* (Cingoli, 1893), p. 22.

[53] Wadding, *Annales*, *anno* 1532, XXXIV.

[54] He had been elected on the deposition of Paolo Pisotti.

it would reduce the Capuchin body to the very few members who had not originally been Observants.[55]

Even at the Roman Court there were those who were amazed that such a decree should be published. The Auditor of Papal briefs, Girolamo Ghinucci, when the first draft of the brief was handed to him to be presented to His Holiness, wrote his opinion on the back of the document : " It does not seem becoming that any religious should be forced unwillingly to embrace a less strict observance ; yet if His Holiness wishes it, I in no wise approve that it proceed from His Holiness but let it be committed to another, since such a process is unworthy of the Pope himself."[56] And indeed the reason for the suppression given in the preamble of the brief might have made others beside the Auditor pause : " These friars calling themselves Capuchins," so it runs, " withdraw from the houses of the Observance and dwell in various places where they live a life so exceedingly austere and rigid that it is hardly human, and thus greatly disturb the minds of other members of the Order who in consequence doubt whether they themselves are equally satisfying the obligations of the Rule : thus many are scandalised." One almost suspects that the official who drew up the brief was a cynic, or did he merely lack a sense of humour ?

As for Pope Clement, broken in health and overwhelmed with cares—for the world had got beyond his mastery—he probably saw in the business but one more bone of contention and that of lesser moment, which the cardinals had best settle as they might.

The Capuchins were given fifteen days from the notification of the decree to return to the Observants, under pain of excommunication should they disobey.

It was ten days later, on the feast of St. Mark, that in the small friary of Sant' Eufemia on the Esquiline Hill they received official notification of the decree with orders to

55 Archiv. Vatican. Minute dei Brevi di Clemente VII, Arm. XL, vol. 47, n. 243 ; cf. *De Primordiis*, p. 115—the Brief which as originally drafted was a direct order from the Pope was consequently amended to put the onus of the suppression on the Cardinal Protector. See the original form with its emendations in *De Primordiis*, p. 116-117. cf. *Bull, Ord. Cap.* 1, p. 11.

56 " Vitam admodum austeram et rigidam ac fere non humanam ducunt, in maximam aliorum ipsius Ordinis professorum qui propterea dubitant se Regulae pariter non satisfacere, perturbationem et grave scandalim plurimorum."

abandon Sant' Eufemia and leave the city without delay. They were at dinner when the notification was brought to them. The agent of the Cardinal Protector, to emphasise the promptitude with which they were expected to obey the decree, lighted a candle and bade them depart in the burning of the candle : it was a dramatic gesture.[57] The friars obeyed literally ; rising from table and taking with them only their breviaries, they formed in procession and so left the city, taking the road which led to the basilica of San Lorenzo outside the walls. It was, be it remembered, St. Mark's day, when processional visits were made to the greater churches. Perhaps Lodovico, the Commissary General, thought thus to make a dignified departure and avoid the comments of the people. The canons-regular who served San Lorenzo received them courteously, and learning the reason of their coming, bade them remain as guests for a few days.

Lodovico meanwhile had not been idle. Aware of the danger overhanging the congregation, he had sent word to the friends of the brethren, to the Duchess of Camerino, to Vittoria Colonna, to Camillo Orsini and others ; and these came hurrying to Rome to avert the disaster. In the city, no sooner was the cause of the Capuchins' departure known than there was no little popular excitement. The hermit-preacher, Brandano—he who had denounced the iniquities of the Romans previous to the Sack of Rome—paraded the streets, crying aloud : " The harlot and the wicked are made welcome ; the men of God are driven forth." Crowds followed him lamenting loudly the departure of the Capuchins : many showed their sympathy by carrying provisions to San Lorenzo for the friars' sustenance ; so that, says a chronicler, " the brethren were better fed now than they ever were in the city."[58] Ascanio Colonna invited some of them to be his guests at Nemi on the shore of the lake of

[57] The story of the lighted candle is told by Bernardino da Colpetrazzo in his narration of the event. Mario da Mercato-Seraceno says the friars were given a few days in which to make their departure, from which I conclude that the notice to leave Rome was the official notification of the Pope's brief. P. Edouard d'Alençon rejects the story of the candle, as contradicting " the more probable statement of Mario," but it seems to me he has taken the incident too literally. It was a period when dramatic gestures were fashionable. cf. *De Primordiis*, p. 118. Boverius, *Annales*, *anno* 1534, has a long confused account of the departure from Rome, teeming with improbabilities.

[58] Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, I, p. 374.

Albano.[59] So high ran the feeling amongst all classes of the people, that a few days later the Pope issued another mitigating brief: the Capuchins, so it was now decreed, were not in future to receive friars from the Observants nor to take new houses without apostolic sanction: but no word was said that those Observants who had already joined the Capuchins should return to their original communities. The congregation was saved.[60]

Clement VII died in the following September and Cardinal Alessandro Farnese ascended the papal throne under the name of Paul III. There followed a series of edicts dealing with the situation as between the Observants and the Capuchins. At the General Chapter of the Observants held at Pentecost the following year, it was decreed that in every province houses should be set apart, according to the brief of Clement VII, for those brethren desirous of a stricter observance. In consequence of this decree the Capuchins were ordered by the Pope not to receive any more Observant friars. But immediately afterwards the ordinance was modified to the effect that unless these "houses of recollection" were established within two months, Observant friars desirous of reform might pass over to the Capuchins[61]. And so for awhile the matter was settled; but, as we shall see, only for awhile. In the meantime, on November 7 of the previous year, Paolo Pisotti, broken with sickness and disappointment, had died at Parma.

[59] cf. Giuseppe da Monterondo: op. cit., p. 135.

[60] Wadding, *Annales*, *anno* 1534, LXXV. Wadding dates the brief April 9. This is evidently an error (Wadding's dates are frequently incorrect); the preamble is manifestly a reference to the brief of April 15.

[61] cf. Bullar, *Ord. Cap.* I, pp. 12, 13, 14, 15. Wadding, *Annales*, *anno* 1534-5.

CHAPTER III

A STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

(i)

BEFORE we proceed further it may be well to disentangle the threads of the conflict between the Observants and the Capuchins : for as is frequently the case the ostensible reasons were of far less import to either side than those which were not so easily voiced. Were it true that the conflict so stubbornly sustained by both the parties was merely about the form of a habit and other external matters, as might superficially seem to be the case, the bitterness on the one side and the stubbornness on both sides might be judged hardly of serious interest to any serious reader : a petty squabble unworthy in its warm feeling of men of religion. But behind these easily arguable points lay a question which stretched far beyond those dissensions ; a question on the solution of which lay in truth the fate of Christendom. It was no less than the problem of the supremacy of the spirit in religion as against the worldliness which had invaded the Church and had sapped the vitality and sincerity of the faith men professed. In a wider sphere than that of the Franciscan Order, the problem was exercising the consciences of men in the religious reaction which was everywhere making itself felt both within the bounds of orthodoxy and in the unorthodox revolutions which were already rending Christian society, and would rend it yet more deeply before those responsible for the protection of the Church were fully aroused to their duty. Let us not blame with undue harshness the unfaithful or the blind shepherds of the flock. They themselves were the victims of a disease which had been allowed to grow into a malignant evil through the growing luxury and godless ambitions of a long generation of men ; until the social structure of the Christian world was

flooded with an artificial light which gave false values to the facts of life. Men's thoughts and judgments seldom escape the action of the social atmosphere in which they live ; and in our judgments of individuals and masses of individuals this has to be remembered. An Alexander VI or a Wolsey must be judged in reference to their age as well as in reference to the absolute moral law, if full justice is to be done them. It is easy to speak with scorn of the courtier-prelates who hunted and played and intrigued for their own or their family interests whilst the Church was threatened with almost universal heresy and schism ; yet in truth they deserve some pity. They were largely what kings and statecraft and society made them. The marvel was that when the great crisis came so many revealed an uncorrupted faith and became either reformers themselves or were willing to submit to the reform.

In reviewing the situation in which the Franciscan Order found itself at this period, one needs an unimpassioned outlook if the truth is to be told—an unimpassioned outlook not commonly found in the chroniclers on either side who wrote during the succeeding century. Let it be granted that the Italian Observants had as a body fallen away from the austere simplicity and high spirituality which had been their hall-mark in the days of San Bernardino of Siena ; that they were no longer content with mean dwellings and simple churches : that they lived more softly and with less regard to the severe poverty of their first days ; that they, like other religious orders and indeed the Church at large, had become inordinately externalised to the detriment of the inner spirit. Yet here again, remember the tremendous odds they had been up against during the century or thereabouts which had elapsed since San Bernardino had cast such a lustre of sanctity over the nascent Reform. They had lived through one of the most worldly periods in the history of the Church, when the sanctuary itself had been defiled by a pagan spirit and when the Christian law had been frankly disregarded, and the pleasures of life had taken the place of that Christian asceticism which in some degree must be the mark of the true Christian. Possibly had they remained isolated from the world in the hermitages and secluded spots favoured by the pioneers of the Observant Reform they might

have escaped the contagion; but by the instinct of the apostolic character inherent in the Franciscan life they had been drawn into the busy centres of the world's life and there temptation began. Popularity swelled their numbers and brought abundant alms. Large friaries were built or taken over from the Conventuals to house the large communities; and, abundant though alms might be, the upkeep meant a constantly growing solicitude for temporal needs with an increasing relaxation of the strict law of poverty as instituted by St. Francis.

It is to the credit of the Observants that the Observant spirit such as flamed in the soul of Fra Paoluccio and San Bernardino never died out, notwithstanding the tremendous temptation of the age; and it was this wholesome leaven which caused the disaffection in the Observant body and the restlessness for reform. But a reversion to the stricter observance of the earlier days had been made difficult by the system which had grown up since the days of San Bernardino. It is comparatively easy for an individual to renounce his property and chattels, his ambitions and habits of life; it is not so easy for an organised society. A return to the simple and strict observance of the earlier time would have meant for instance the giving up of spacious friaries and costly churches, it would have meant the renunciation of legacies and of that "coloured proprietorship" by which through the concessions of Popes Martin IV and Martin V the friars became virtual owners of the goods kept for them by the apostolic syndics.[1] These things it was which made any radical reform almost impossible, for the superiors could not see their way to a renunciation which would have disorganised the system as it had come to be.[2] When in 1523

[1] Many of the Ultramontane Observant provinces, however, had persistently refused to accept the Martinian concessions. Generally speaking, relaxation prevailed more in the Cismontane Provinces, i.e., those of Italy and the East European provinces subject to the Cismontane Vicar-General.

[2] Thus the Minister General Lichetto, though he himself was in favour of reform, forbade the friars to give up any of the larger convents taken over from the Conventuals. cf. Holzapfel, *Manuale Historiae*, Ord. FF. Minorum, p. 272. Wadding, *anno* 1520, XXVIII.

Like other of his successors who acknowledged the need for reform, he found himself up against an established tradition which he was not strong enough to override. See the story of the friar who upbraided him for allowing the brethren zealous for stricter observance to be persecuted by the community (Wadding, *ibid.*). Lichetto, however, permitted certain small friaries to be

Quiñones of the reformed Discalceati in Spain was elected Minister General, hope revived amongst the more zealous of the Italian Observants. Quiñones did indeed make ordinances of radical reform in his visitation of the Italian provinces,[3] but he was shortly afterwards created cardinal, and the Vicar General of the Italian Observants allowed the ordinances to remain a dead letter. As a beginning of reform certain Ministers General had established separate houses for those who wished to observe the Rule more strictly ; but the main body of the Observants were opposed to these privileged communities and did their best to suppress them. So it came about in the end that the Reform movement took refuge in separate congregations governed by their own superiors either in subjection to the suzerain authority of the Minister General or, as in the case of the Capuchins and for a time the Spanish Discalceati, in complete independence of the Observants.

It had indeed been a fateful day for the Observants when they first aspired to unite the whole Franciscan Order under their own jurisdiction ; that was the beginning of trouble. It meant in reality that the fervour and strength of purpose, which might have been concentrated on the maintenance and development of the spiritual observance, was in no small measure diverted to the development and organisation of an external polity, and in the effort obedience to the society was largely substituted for obedience to the Rule which the brethren vowed to observe ; so that in practice the ordinances and customs and even the legalised relaxations came to have a more immediate authority with the body of the friars than had the Rule itself.[4] It may be that San Bernardino of Siena intuitively saw this danger when he set

set apart for those desiring a stricter observance, particularly in the Marches of Ancona ; but under his successor Paolo da Soncino, these houses were allowed to fall into disuse, lest they should bring about a schism in the Order and prejudice the larger communities. cf. De Gubernatis, *Orbis Seraphicus*, t. II, p. 328 (Lugduni, 1685). Quiñones (Franciscus de Angelis) when Minister General similarly favoured " houses of recollection " ; but again his successor sought to suppress them.

[3] Wadding, *Annales*, *anno* 1525, XI-XII. cf. Giovanni da Fano : *Dialogo di la Salute*, p. 82.

[4] This is, in fact, the argument of Giovanni da Fano in his first (unrevised) edition of the *Dialogo di la Salute*—and Giovanni was no worldly religious, but a zealot for reform. He modified this opinion in the revised edition published after he joined the Capuchins.

himself in opposition to San Giovanni da Capestrano and the body of the Observants in their design to bring the Conventuals under the controlling power of the Observants.[5] The effective union with the Conventuals never came off; but the policy favoured for a time by San Giovanni led to the taking over of sumptuous Conventual friaries as occasion offered and the building of larger houses and churches and to the distracting search for means for their maintenance, and thus to a decline from the ideal of the original Observance as contemplated by Fra Paoluccio and the first Observants. As we have said the external edifice came to be of more concern to the majority of the friars than the spirit which should have dwelt in it.

An apologist writing in the thick of the fray expressed the real cause of division between the Capuchins and the Observants in a neatly worded phrase: *La regola non e facta per la obedientia ma la obedientia per la regola*—the Rule does not exist for the sake of the organised institution, but the institution for the sake of the Rule.[6] In other words the Capuchins aimed to re-establish the supremacy of the Rule of St. Francis over the organisation, and to bring the organised body itself into a true obedience to the Rule. They therefore refused to acknowledge any legal interpretation or concession as having equal binding force with the Rule, and they disclaimed any interpretation or concession which was to the detriment of the pure observance of the Rule as they conceived St. Francis himself would wish it to be observed. For that reason, as the apologist just quoted observed, they could not remain within the Observant organisation as it then existed. "What gain would it be? No man can give what he has not got; they (the Observants) could not support them in the spirit of the Rule, and should they reunite with the Observants they would themselves lose the spirit."

After all it was the same principle which had driven the Observants themselves to separate from the Conventual

[5] San Bernardino at the General Chapter of 1443 opposed the election of the Observant Alberto da Sarziano which was supported by San Giov nni and the body of the Observants. cf. Wadding, *anno* 1443. Ferrers Howell: *S. Bernardino of Siena*, p. 79.

San Giovanni eventually confessed that San Bernardino had taken a more spiritual view of the situation than he himself had.

[6] Epistola seu Informatio Victoriae Colonna ad Paulum III. cf. Appendix, Vol. II.

system and which, at a still earlier period, had forced the Spirituals into isolation from the brethren of the Community.

Thus the conflict between the Capuchins and the Observants, which to the superficial observer might seem but a disedifying contention over trifles, was in reality that never-ending conflict between the spirit in pursuit of an ideal and the claim of the established system to set the law for the spirit: a conflict which can only be averted when the established system is itself the manifest guardian of the ideal.

This, the real issue, came more clearly into view as the defence of the Capuchins was taken up by others of more perspicacious intellect and, let it be added, of deeper spiritual feeling than the Commissary General Lodovico. For Lodovico, strenuous fighter as he had been for the new Reform, was himself no true representative of the idealism and convictions for which hundreds of the Observants had left the cloisters in which they had been reared. He had raised the standard of revolt and by his audaciousness and indomitable purpose had made himself the spokesman and leader of the revolting company. Yet of the spiritual force behind him he had but little understanding; and this was to be the cause of the first tragedy which was to mark the progress of the Capuchin Reform.

(ii)

The beginning of the tragedy came with the conviction which many of the Capuchins now had that Lodovico's leadership was not for the spiritual good of the Reform. His anxiety to swell the number of the brethren, which led him to receive postulants without discrimination as to their motive and quality, and his provocative imprudences were symptoms which caused uneasiness to those who joined the Capuchin family in search of a greater unworldliness and simplicity. He gave the impression that he was merely an Observant in revolt rather than a true Capuchin. Moreover his idea of government was not in accord with the genuine Franciscan tradition.[7] It was a one-man government. Since his appointment as Commissary General he had ruled

[7] *Supra*. p. 52

without the advice of definitors ; nor had he convoked a Chapter of the Order as provided in the Rule. Questions of discipline and organisation had arisen in view of the increase and spread of the friars which could not be satisfactorily dealt with except in a Chapter, and it was clear to those who had already had experience in the government of Observant communities that there was danger both to the individual members and the body corporate of the Reform, were the present unorganised condition of the congregation to continue. By this time the Reform numbered about seven hundred friars.[8] But to the proposal that a General Chapter should be convoked Lodovico turned a deaf ear. The Capuchin family, he declared, owed its existence to him ; he had received his authority from Pope Clement VII and it was for him to determine when a Chapter would be necessary. At present he had no intention of calling a Chapter ; it would be but a needless trouble. Lodovico's attitude only the more convinced the experienced friars that a Chapter was imperatively necessary to save the Reform from dissolution ; yet a feeling of loyalty to one who, whatever his faults, had borne the heat and burden of the day in their common cause, withheld them from a direct appeal to the Pope. It was a difficult situation in which the Capuchins now found themselves. Pressed hard as they were by the Observant superiors, any internal dissension amongst themselves would undoubtedly be taken advantage of by their opponents. In their predicament they had recourse to the Master General of the Conventuals who on November 23 wrote from Paris to Lodovico urgently admonishing him to convoke a Chapter now long overdue.[9] But by the time this letter arrived in Rome the Chapter was already in being. For not waiting the result of the appeal to the General, Fra Bernardino Ochino came forward and played a decisive part. He appealed to the lady Vittoria Colonna to use her influence with Lodovico. She had stood his good friend in the late trouble : she might persuade him when others had failed. Some there were who said afterwards that

[8] cf. Vittoria Colonna's letter to the Cardinal Contarini, *infra*.

[9] cf. P. Edouard d'Alençon : *Tribulationes Ordines FF. Minorum Capuccinorum* (Rome, 1914), p. 8, where the letter of the Conventual General is republished from Niccolo Catalono : *Fiume del Terrestre Paradiso* (Firenze, 1652), p. 6 ; and *Compendio di Storia Minoritica*, by Benoffi (Pesaro, 1829), p. 249.

Bernardino Ochino was moved to this step not altogether from pure devotion to principle, but from an ambition to take Lodovico's place. But that is pure conjecture.[10] Vittoria Colonna was Bernardino's friend as well as Lodovico's : and had known him before his migration to the Capuchins.[11]

I have said it was Fra Bernardino who played a decisive part ; rather perhaps should it be said that the lady Vittoria Colonna played the decisive part. For, finding that Lodovico was set against the proposed Chapter in spite of all that was urged in its favour, she by a ruse had him taken to the fortress of Marino, as the guest of her brother Ascanio, where he was entertained at Vittoria's suggestion with the greatest courtesy whilst the Duke and his wife sought by persuasion to soften his obstinacy. That too failing, Lodovico was transported to Rocca di Papa, another Colonna stronghold, and there kept a prisoner until he finally gave in and promised to convoke the Chapter. But Vittoria still did not trust him. She therefore went herself to Pope Paul III and urged him for the good of the Capuchin Reform to order the Chapter to be held. The Pope at first smilingly rebuked her for daring to lay hands on a priest and the superior of an Order ; but nevertheless Vittoria got her way and Lodovico received a Papal command to convoke the Chapter without delay.[12]

The Chapter met at Sant' Eufemia in November 1535.[13] By what method or qualification the electors were chosen is not known ; the only canonically constituted province, that of Calabria, was unrepresented :[14] a fact to be noted later on.

[10] Boverius, anno 1535, XIII.

[11] Mario da Mercato-Seraceno : *Narratione*, cart. 205. cf. Edouard d' Alençon, *Tribulationes Ord. FF. Min. Capuccinorum* (Romae, 1914), pp. 7-8.

[12] See the story of the events leading up to this Chapter in Mario da Mercato-Seraceno, *Narratione*, cart. 204-205. Mario had his information from Vittoria Colonna's sister-in-law, the Duchess of Tagliocozza, who was a party to the ruse by which Lodovico was brought to Marino. According to Mario one reason of Lodovico's obstinacy was his dislike of Bernardino Ochino (cart. 207).

[13] This is evident from the letter of Paul III. *Cum Sicut*, Apil 29, 1536 ; some of the early chronicles of the Order erroneously assign it to Pentecost, 1536.

[14] The Vicar Provincial, Bernardino da Reggio, lay sick in the friary of Reggio. He died on December 19. See the letter of Lodovico da Reggio, *infra*.

VITTORIA COLONNA

From a portrait by G. Muziano in Galeria Colonna, Rome

Lodovico at the opening session addressed the Capitular fathers ; he urged them to remain firm in their resolve to observe the Rule literally and strictly and to suffer persecutions with patience and courage. Then, giving an account of his stewardship, he recited how he had laboured and suffered for the cause. It is evident that Lodovico expected to have a voice in the future council of the Order, even if he were not elected its head. To his astonishment the inconceivable happened ; Bernardino d'Asti was elected Vicar General and Lodovico was not given a place even amongst the definitors. The scene which followed struck sorrow into the hearts of all present. Bereft of all sense of dignity, Lodovico refused the customary obeisance to the newly elected Vicar and heaped bitter reproaches upon the capitular fathers for their ingratitude. Again he recited all he had done and suffered, and ended with a menace : "Know you that I am Lodovico da Fossombrone; I am a Tenaglia. I have made a great stir and I know how to make a yet greater." With that he withdrew and went with some few followers to take up his abode in a house known as San Tomasso, but in what quarter of the city is not known.[15]

With a calm deliberateness characteristic of him, Bernardino d'Asti now led the business of the Chapter to the main purpose for which it had been convoked—the establishment of regular government and the reconsideration of the Constitutions of the Order with a view to a firmer discipline. As to the government of the Order it was ordained that in future a Chapter should be held annually and that the Vicar General should hold office for three years, but not longer. The congregation was divided into nine provinces and Vicars Provincial were appointed.[16] The constitutions were revised in view of the new conditions which had arisen.[16a]

[15] Mario da Mercato-Seraceno, *Narratione*, cart. 211. Mario states that he was told the story by P. Eusebio d'Ancona, who was present at the Chapter. cf. Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, I, p. 456, who states that Ochino refused to be elected Vicar General, alleging that he had a brief from the Pope which freed him from accepting that office.

[16] Eight new Provinces were formally established in addition to the existing Province of Calabria. They were the Provinces of the Marches of Ancona, Naples, Milan, Rome, Venice, Umbria, Sicily and Tuscany. The establishment of these Provinces in 1535 is proved by the presence of their Vicar-Provincials at the General Chapter held the following year. See *infra*.

[16a] See *Infra*.

Two clauses introduced into the constitutions were of fundamental importance. The first was an enactment that the friars "obey and be subject in all humility to the Pope the father of all Christians and to all other Catholic bishops." It meant a renunciation of those inordinate exemptions from episcopal authority enjoyed by religious which had become one of the crying abuses of the time and which later on were drastically dealt with by the Council of Trent. The other clause was significant of the new phase of its history upon which the Capuchin Reform was now entering. It ran thus: "We renounce for ever all privileges and glosses which, relaxing the Rule, turn us aside from its pure observance and estrange us from the loving righteous and holy mind of Christ which spoke in St. Francis; and we accept only as the one living and authentic commentary on the Rule, the declarations of the Sovereign Pontiffs, especially Nicholas III and Clement V of happy memory, and the most holy life, teaching and examples of our Seraphic Father himself." The clause is significant inasmuch as it modifies the original Capuchin formula of faith, "to observe the Rule to the letter without gloss." In truth to observe any Rule to the letter without gloss is a practical impossibility: the attempt to do so would stultify all life. But the first Capuchins themselves had a canon of interpretation which gave inspiration to the letter, and that was the life of St. Francis himself. The new clause retains and explicitly mentions this inspiring canon, but it adds another, "the declarations of the Sovereign Pontiffs, especially Nicholas III and Clement V." It is, however, to be noted that the declarations of those two Pontiffs were generally received amongst Franciscans as expressly intended to safeguard the strict observance of the Rule in face of practical difficulties.[17] They were taken to belong to a category apart from such Papal decrees as allowed and legalised avowed relaxations, such as the decrees of Innocent IV[18] which caused such

[17] The Decretals of Nicholas III *Exiit* (*Bull. Franc. III*, p. 404) and of Clement V, *Exivi* (*ibid.* V, p. 80) forbade the friars to receive money, but allowed proctors or "spiritual friends" to receive and retain money for the friars' use. But the money thus received by the proctors remained the property of the donors until it was expended for the friars, and the friars had meanwhile no claim to it. The proctors were in fact agents of the donors, not of the friars.

[18] Innocent IV had made the friars the practical owners of money collected for them by the proctors, since the proctors were under the control of

consternation amongst the more fervent friars in the thirteenth century and the decrees of Martin IV and Martin V which had long been the cause of divisions in the Observant family.[19] All such decrees or declarations in favour of manifest relaxations were rejected in the clause now added to the Capuchin Constitutions, whilst such declarations as safeguarded or were intended to safeguard a strict observance, were accepted. To some extent indeed the acceptance of the " declarations," embodying as they do certain modifications of the original simple life of the Franciscans, was an acknowledgment that a complete reversion to the simplicity of the primitive fraternity such as Matteo da Bascio had dreamed of, was impracticable : the new clause recognised the necessity of practical developments yet sought to keep as near as might be to the original source whence the Franciscan life sprang ; it marks the passing of the pure ideal into the realm of practical politics ; a momentous step in the history of any society. Another clause was added, wholly in keeping with the mind of St. Francis. It declared that all food left over from the daily meal of the friars should be distributed to the poor at the friary gate.[20]

Lodovico, the ex-Commissary General, was as good as his word when he told the Capitular fathers that he knew how

the friars and were, in fact, the legal representatives of the friars. (cf. bull, *Franc.* I, p. 400 and p. 487). At the General Chapter of Genoa and Metz, 1254, this relaxation was rejected by the friars. (cf. Eccleston, *De Adventu FF. Minorum*, col. viii ; Denifle und Erhle : *Archiv. für Litteratur und Kirchengeschichte*, VI, p. 34.

[19] In 1283 Martin IV in his bull *Exultantes* (*bull., Franc.* III, p. 501) restored the authorisation granted by Innocent IV, so that once again the friars who accepted the decree became legal owners of the goods held for them by the proctors. Martin V, by the brief *Ad Fatum* (*ibid.* VII, p. 737), allowed the friars to hold lands for the sake of revenue and to administer them as proctors of the Holy See. The friars, zealous for strict observance, refused to accept these decrees. Amongst the Observants the Italians accepted whilst the Ultramontanes rejected them. They were accepted by the Conventuals.

[20] Concerning the decisions and ordinances made at this Chapter, see P. Edouard d'Alençon's scholarly criticism and judgment in *Tribulationes*, pp. 10-11. But since this book was written the text of the Constitutions of 1535 has been recovered through the discovery at Locarno of a copy of the printed edition of 1537. *Vide* the brief of Paul III, *Cum sicut* in the original text preserved in the Vatican Archives, Arm. XLI, vol. 2, *Minute dei Brevi di Paolo III*, epist. 280, fol. 263. The published text issued on April 29, 1536, omits the most interesting passages. The original text is published in *Tribulationes*, pp. 12-13. The letters of Vittoria Colonna are of first importance in elucidating the events of this period. Boverius, as usual, has dramatised the story of the Chapter without any attempt at a critical analysis.

"to make a yet greater stir." For fresh troubles were already brewing and they would be his opportunity. In the previous May the Observants had elected a new Minister General, Vicenzo Lunello,[21] a man of very different temperament and character from Paolo Pisotti: for Lunello was indifferent to personal honours and shunned the world's applause; he was of the school of the stricter observance and was not averse to the Reform movement. Like Quiñones he favoured the Riformati; he would be willing to extend a like favour to the Capuchins provided they placed themselves under the Observant jurisdiction. He had indeed been elected to carry through the provisions of the brief of Clement VII ordering the institution of "houses of recollection" for the friars desirous of a stricter observance. In the event, it is true he did little to give effect to the Reform; not from lack of will, but because he was not strong enough to overcome the difficulties in his way.

On his assumption of office his policy towards the Capuchins was one of conciliation, yet it was to be conciliation on the basis of their submission to his authority as Minister General and incorporation into the Observant body. To effect this he was ready to make concessions allowing them to live in communities governed by superiors elected by themselves but subject to the Observant Provincial-Ministers. He would even allow them to retain their own form of habit should they greatly desire it.[22]

In the autumn of 1535 he made a visitation of the provinces in the kingdom of Naples, and in the course of his visitation towards the end of October, at Nicotia he met Lodovico da Reggio, the acting-superior of the Calabrian Capuchins.[23] To him he made proposals for reunion with the family of the Observance. He deplored, he said, the evil government of his predecessor Paolo Pisotti, and the persecutions which had driven the Calabrian Recollets out of the

[21] Lunello was elected at the General Chapter held at Nizza on May 14, 1535.

[22] So says Boverius; it is not improbable in view of Lunello's declaration to Lodovico da Reggio, that he was willing to concede the pious desires of the Calabrian Capuchins even in matters other than those of government and the liberty to observe strictly the Rule. cf. *Litterae P. Ludovici Rhegini ad P. Bernardinam Astensem*, published by P. Edouard d'Alençon in *Tribulationes*, p. 62.

[23] The Vicar Provincial, Bernardino da Reggio, was sick of the illness to which he succumbed on December 19 following.

Observant family " to the ruin of the Order and the scandal of the world." He begged that the Capuchin superiors would heal the schism, urging that according to the Rule all the friars should be under one Minister General. He would be most happy to allow them to observe the Rule in its purity and would set apart houses for them where they should live under their own superiors and even under a Vicar Provincial of their own election. The Minister of the province would have no authority over them except to visit the houses and punish transgressors should there be such. He was ready to meet their pious desires even in regard to further concessions. Lodovico thanked the Minister General for his goodwill, but recalled to his mind the history of former promises and how in spite of the goodwill shown to the Recollets by Cardinal Quiñones when Minister General, they had been driven out of their houses and subjected to all manner of persecution, until in despair they had fled from the "Babylonian confusion " in which " the dogs had become wolves and the shepherds thieves." To which plain-speaking the Minister General listened with sorrowful sympathy. Eventually Lodovico was induced to state the conditions on which subject to the approval of the Vicar General of the Congregation, reunion with the Observants might come about. They were very similar to those which the Minister General himself had proposed, but with these additions: the Capuchins, in accordance with the Rule they had vowed to observe, would obey the General in all things " which are not against their own soul and the Rule," and further that the instrument of reunion should be confirmed by a bull of the Pope inflicting censure on those who violated its provisions, lest the promised liberties should be set at nought as had happened on former occasions.[24] The negotiations between the Calabrian Capuchins and the Minister General had proceeded thus far when they became merged in a wider effort on the part of the Observants to bring about the subjection of the Capuchin Congregation. In the meantime Lunello before leaving Naples had persuaded the Emperor

[24] cf. *Litterae P. Ludovici Rhegini, ut supra.* This letter was written on January 16, 1536, and gives a detailed account of Lodovico's interview with Lunello. It was discovered in 1912 in the archives of the Postulator General of the Capuchins.

Charles V to write to Paul III urging that the Capuchins should not be allowed to increase in numbers to the detriment of the friars of the Observance, and especially that they should not be allowed to found houses in Spain. It was a diplomatic move on the part of Lunello; for the Reform movement amongst the Observants in Spain was already causing uneasiness to the Observant superiors and the presence of the Capuchins in that country might well have caused many of the Spanish Observants to pass over to the new Reform, perhaps in greater numbers even than in Italy.[25] The danger was the greater because of the further procrastination of the Observants themselves to give effect to the Reform edict of Clement VII. The General Chapter held in May had ordained that "the houses of recollection" should be forthwith established in all the provinces; yet time went on and no steps had been taken to carry out the decree; and a further restlessness showed itself among those Observants who were desirous of reform. To prevent a further exodus, further pontifical decrees were necessary.[26]

Then about the middle of December the Minister General on his return to Rome obtained from the Pope a commission of three cardinals, favourable to the cause of the Observants, to adjudicate upon the matters between themselves and the Capuchins; amongst the three being Cardinal Quiñones. Their first act was to forbid the Capuchins to receive Observants pending the settlement of the controversy.[27] It soon became evident that this injunction of the cardinals, together with the letter of the Emperor Charles V, were but steps to prepare the way for the suppression of the Capuchin Reform or its subjection to the Observant General.

[25] At this very time Fray Juan Pasquale, the leader of the Reformed Conventuals in Spain, was in Rome seeking permission to receive Observants into his Reform. His petition was eventually granted by Paul III in 1541. (*Bullar. Min. Discalceatorum* I, p. 153). These Reformed Conventuals were an offshoot of the Discalced Franciscans, or Fratres de Caputio. St. Peter of Alcantara was their chief propagator. Before his death in 1562 they were, however, reunited with the Observants. They wore the same form of habit as the Capuchins and were very similar in their mode of life.

[26] *Pastoralis Officii*, August 14, 1535 (*Bullar. Cap.* I, p. 14, Wadding, *anno* 1535, XXV), by which Observants are forbidden to pass over to the Capuchins, but the brief *Dudum postquam*, August 19, 1536 (*Bullar. Cap. I*, p. 15, Wadding, *anno* 1535, XXXVI) allows Observants to migrate, should the houses of recollection not be established within two months.

[27] cf Wadding, *anno* 1535, XXXVII.

For an intensive campaign to discredit the Capuchins was now set on foot. It was this new offensive which now gave Lodovico, the ex-Commissary General, his opportunity to carry out his threat to stir up a yet greater trouble. He could hope for no assistance from the Conventual General who, as suzerain, had ordered him to convoke the Chapter and who undoubtedly would uphold the new superiors. Lodovico now turned to the Observants and made a bid for their support; and Cardinal Quiñones, who in 1526 as Minister General had excommunicated him as a fugitive from the Order, now showed himself ready to use him as an instrument against the Capuchins.[28]

On their part the Capuchins were alert to the danger and in Bernardino d'Asti they had a leader as firm as he was prudent. And behind Bernardino d'Asti stood Vittoria Colonna, that "virile soul in a feminine body" as Paul III once addressed her. It was she who marshalled the forces of the defence whilst Bernardino guided and held in hand the company under his command. Early in January 1536, Bernardino had obtained from the Pope that the commission of cardinals appointed "to settle the differences between the Observants and Capuchins" should be enlarged by the addition of three cardinals favourable to the Capuchin Reform, amongst them the noble Contarini.[29] The contest now became general all along the line, Lodovico da Fossombrone for his own ends co-operating with the Observants. On the commission of cardinals he had a strong supporter in Cardinal Quiñones: outside the commission he managed to obtain a favourable hearing from Cardinals di Cupis—"il cardinale di Trani" as he was commonly styled—and Palmerio[30] both, however, friendly to the Capuchin Reform. Lodovico it would seem contended that the recent Chapter of the Capuchins was invalid owing to lack of sufficient

[28] cf. Vittoria Colonna, in Tacchi Venturi, loc. cit., pp. 174-175.

[29] The three cardinals were Contarini, Simonetta and Ghinucci; their names appear as subscribing to the brief *Regimini Universalis* of January 4, 1537, together with the three cardinals Quiñones, Campeggi and Pucci, who were the original three members of the commission. cf. P. Edouard d'Alençon, *Tribulationes*, pp. 40, 49, *seq.*

[30] Card. Palmerio had just offered the Capuchins the monastery of the Most Holy Trinity at Mileto in Sicily, of which he was abbot *in commendam*. The Capuchins, however, refused it, partly on the ground that it was not in keeping with the poverty of their other houses. cf. *Litterae P. Ludovici Rhegini*, loc. cit., p. 65.

representation of the body of the friars. Possibly, too, he may have urged the irregularity of the proceedings leading up to the Chapter when he had been forcibly detained by the Colonna at Rocca di Papa and made to convoke the Chapter under duress. He certainly succeeded in gaining a sympathetic hearing even from many who were in no way unfriendly to the Capuchin body. In February Vittoria Colonna thought it well to warn the Pope through his secretary Ambrogio Recalcati against Lodovico's intrigues. "When he was doing well," she wrote, "little favour was shown him ; to-day when he is seeking to ruin this congregation he is favourably received with an impious piety and a malign charity."[31] But Vittoria Colonna went further. With her intimate knowledge of the Papal Court she was aware that the case of the Capuchins was not put forward by the cardinals favourable to the Reform with the same directness and vigour as were the claims of the Observants by Quiñones and those of his party. Quiñones was the Cardinal Protector of the whole Franciscan Order and his words carried weight in virtue of his official capacity, so that even those who disagreed with him, were reluctant publicly to stand up against him ; and Quiñones, himself an Observant, was an active partisan of the Observants. Vittoria Colonna, therefore, now put the case of the Capuchins directly before Paul III in a letter she addressed to him in the beginning of February. It is a lengthy document ; its purport is to give reasons why a subjection of the Capuchin Congregation to the Observant superiors would be destructive of the Reform; incidentally it is an indictment of the Observants for their remissness in reforming themselves. The letter was characteristically outspoken. "It is ten years," she wrote, "since this holy congregation began to live strictly according to the Rule of St. Francis, and though all human means have been made use of to bring about its destruction it has grown in fervour, in numbers and in discipline ; which is clearly a miracle ; and since this cannot be denied, it is asked whether it be not a miracle worked on the Sabbath."[32] The whole case of the Observants, she says in effect, is based upon the

[31] cf. Tacchi Venturi : op cit., p. 174.

[32] An allusion to the Gospel of St. John v, 16, "Therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus because He did these things on the Sabbath." See also chap. ix, 16.

assumption that the Capuchin Reform is a scandal and that to take away this scandal it is needful the Capuchins should make their submission to the Observant General. But to determine this question two things must first be considered—the life and observance of the Capuchins and the need there is for a reform of the Observants themselves. As to the need of this reform no one denies it ; it is denied neither by the General himself nor in Pontifical letters. Until the Observants have reformed themselves it would be perilous for the Capuchins to return to them, since in that case the Capuchins would be in danger of losing their own fervour and the life for which they have endured so much during the past ten years. Their case becomes clearer when it is remembered that the Rule does not exist for the sake of enforcing obedience ; but obedience exists for the sake of the Rule and that one may walk in the way of God and observe the Rule strictly and purely. The Observants say it is impossible to reform thirty thousand friars ; what chance then would the few Capuchins have, were they united with them? But the true reason why the Observants would subject the Capuchins to themselves lies not in their zeal for the observance of the Rule but in their love of power and because they are now less esteemed by the people and receive less abundant alms. Let them reform themselves and then might the Capuchins return to them : but hitherto all reforms which have been begun amongst them have come to nought ; only the Capuchins have made progress in their separation. As to the scandal which is said to arise when an Observant passes over to the Capuchins, with equal reason might it be urged that no one should do any good lest he offend those who do evil ; and that no religious should pass to a stricter Order. Wherefore, let the Observants themselves be prohibited from receiving religious of other Orders ; and let the words of St. Paul and of all the saints be erased which tell us to seek the better way of life. It is in truth the prohibitions preventing those Observants who desire of a stricter observance, from passing to the Capuchins which cause the scandal. When the Observants separated themselves from the Conventuals they had no such scruples ; but now they call for prohibitions and excommunications.[33]

[33] The original letter sent to Paul III is yet undiscovered, but a transcript

The letter was written on the eve of Vittoria Colonna's visit to Naples about the middle of February, where she probably met and conversed with the Emperor concerning his letter to the Pope denouncing the Capuchins. She had returned to Rome when the Emperor paid his visit to Paul III at the beginning of April, and was the guest of the Colonna at Marino before he entered Rome. It is easy to believe that it was the knowledge he gained from Vittoria which now caused him to commend the Capuchins to the favourable consideration of the Pontiff. When Paul III reminded him of his letter the Emperor replied : " As to that I was badly informed, therefore I retract it."[34] It was probably due to the Emperor's appeal that on April 29, the Pope published a brief confirming the election of Bernardino d'Asti as Vicar General and forbidding anyone to wear the Capuchin habit unless he were living under obedience to Bernardino and his lawful successors.[35] It was a reply to Lodovico da Fossombrone's contention that the acts of the Chapter in November were invalid. But the brief in its published form bears the impress of the struggle being carried on behind the scenes. As originally drawn up, it not only confirms the election of the Vicar General but explicitly transfers to him and his successors the concessions granted by Clement VII in the bull *Religionis Zelus*, to Lodovico and Raffaele da Fossombrone. Moreover, it gave apostolic authority to the ordinances made at the Chapter. The omission of these clauses in the published brief was undoubtedly due to the supporters of Lodovico. The publication of the clause explicitly transferring to Bernardino d'Asti the privileges granted by Clement

of it is in the General Archives of the Capuchins. Until the recovery of this transcript by P. Edouard d'Alençon, the letter was attributed to Bernardino d'Asti. Boverius (*anno* 1537, I) gives an inaccurate Latin translation and divides it into two parts, which he treats as separate documents. The first part he describes as a letter sent to Cardinal San Severino in 1536 ; the second part as sent to Paul III in 1537. Somewhat naïvely he surmises that Paul III was too busy at the time to reply to it ! Boverius had before his eyes the text given by P. Paolo da Foligno in his MS. Chronicle (fol. 208-211). Paolo ascribes the document to Bernardino d'Asti. What led Boverius into dividing the document it is impossible to say. The letter has been published from the transcript in the Capuchin Archives by P. Edouard in *Tribulationes*, pp. 27-31 ; preceded by a critical disquisition which leaves no doubt as to its authorship and the date when it was written. cf. *ibid.*, pp. 24-27.

34 Bernardino da Colpetrazzo. *Chronica* I, p. 496.

35 Brief *Cum sicut* of April 29, 1536, in *Bullar. Cap.* I, p. 16. Boverius, *anno* 1536, XIV.

VII nominally to Lodovico and his brother Raffaele, would have left Lodovico without any colour of justification for his opposition ; whilst the apostolic confirmation of the capitular ordinances was undesired by the Observants for other reasons. One of these ordinances in particular had aroused their ire—that which declared the submission of the Capuchins in accordance with the mind of St. Francis to the authority of the diocesan bishops in the matter of preaching and ministerial work :[36] a small matter perhaps to the casual reader, but, as the Observants rightly conjectured, indicative of much. The brief thus left open for further discussion questions which vitally affected the life of the Reform ; as became evident in the appeal Lodovico now made for the convoking of a new Chapter. The grounds of the appeal were that at the late Chapter the body of the Capuchins were inadequately represented and that in their new ordinances the Capuchins were departing from the manner of life approved for them in the bull of Clement VII canonically establishing the congregation. Lodovico consequently demanded that in the new Chapter the body of the friars should be adequately represented by a larger number of representatives and that the congregation should be reconstituted strictly as a congregation of hermits according to the original petition presented to and approved by Pope Clement. It was a masterly move, probably suggested as to its second motive by Cardinal Quiñones,[37] who as protector of the Order now appealed to Paul III to order the holding of a new Chapter. The Pope granted the petition, and in view of the seriousness of the issue at stake appointed a cardinal to preside at the Chapter. In the ordinary course the cardinal so nominated would be the protector of the Order ; but the Capuchins could have no confidence in Quiñones who was himself an active partisan in the dispute. The Pope, therefore, delegated Cardinal di Cupis with full authority to convoke the Chapter and preside over its deliberations. Di Cupis' first act was to order Lodovico to leave Rome pending the assembling of the capitular repre-

[36] cf. *infra*, p. 109.

[37] So well informed a witness as Vittoria Colonna explicitly states that Lodovico had been negotiating with Cardinal Quiñones. See her letter to the Duchess of Urbino in Tacchi Venturi, loc. cit., pp. 174-175.

sentatives ; to which act he was urged by Vittoria Colonna, who considering a new Chapter unnecessary and disapproving of it, was determined as far as she could, to secure that its deliberations should not be jeopardised by the intrigues of the ex-Commissary.[38]

The new Chapter met on September 22.[39] Lodovico was allowed to attend it in order to present his case. To his dismay Bernardino d'Asti and the definitors were re-elected. Nevertheless he put forth his proposals as to the future constitutions of the Capuchin congregation, making it known that upon their acceptance would depend his own future action. Briefly put, his proposals were that the Capuchins should lay aside preaching and the active ministry, and retire into hermitages where they were to devote themselves to contemplation and manual labour ; and further, that they renounce their subjection to the General of the Conventuals and place themselves under the jurisdiction of the Observant Minister General. The Capitular fathers refused even to consider the proposals : they would abide by the canonical state in which they were and keep their freedom to observe the Rule simply and purely according to their own constitutions.[40] Thereupon Lodovico passionately declared that he would have no more to do with them ; he would leave their company. To this defiance the Chapter, with the approval of the Cardinal, replied by ordering him either return to his obedience to the superiors of the congregation or to put aside the habit of a Capuchin and be expelled the Order. Lodovico would neither obey nor put aside the Capuchin habit and withdrew to carry on his own intrigues and maybe set up a new Reform after his own mind. Three weeks later, as he continued contumacious, the Pope formally confirmed the Capitular sentence.[41]

[38] cf. *Carteggio di Vitt Colonna*, epist. LXX, p. 106.

[39] The date of the Chapter seems established by an interesting document in the Provincial Archives of the Capuchins in Assisi, and recently published in *Anal. Ord. Cap.*, vol. xliii, p. 285, *seq.* The document is a report of the Chapter written by Fra Francesco da Cannobio. According to this report there were eighty-three electors in the Chapter, including Vicar Provincials, Discreets and Guardians.

[40] Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, I, pp. 469-471. It should be noted that Lodovico's proposal was in flat contradiction to the life of the first Capuchins. The Constitutions of 1529 had expressly emphasised the duty of preaching.

[41] Boverius, *anno* 1536, IX-X, gives a dramatic description of Lodovico's ejection from the Chapter by Cardinal di Trani, but cf. brief *Superiorbus die-*

For Lodovico da Fossombrone, with his manifest ambition and his readiness to sacrifice every interest so that he might have his own way, one can have little sympathy. A pushful personality, fearless of danger but without the ennobling trait of a selfless ambition, he had succumbed to his vanity. Excommunicated by the Pope, he passed into obscurity. He had no good word to say for the brethren whom he had deserted ; and no one seems to have had a good word to say for him, except the brethren who, whatever his failures, yet continued to pray for him. Some sixteen years passed and the Vicar General of the time sent to him friars to invite him to return. Pitifully, if the report be true, he exclaimed : " During all these years I was never asked to return !" And for awhile he dwelt with the brethren in their friary at Amelia in the Umbrian hills. But the Cardinal Protector when he heard of it commanded that he should leave, so one story runs, and Lodovico betook himself to a solitary's cell and there ended his days.[42] But another and later story says he went back to the Camaldolese hermits who had befriended him at the beginning, and in return for his priestly services received shelter and food.[43]

For Lodovico, as we have said, one can feel but little sympathy, though undoubtedly he craved for it. It is otherwise with Matteo da Bascio who after seven years of self-effacement now re-enters for one flitting moment into this story, only to pass out of the Reform of which unwittingly he was the herald.

The motive of his passing out is nowhere clearly stated. According to the general story he came to Rome at the time of the General Chapter of 1536, and then learned for the first time that no one might lawfully wear the habit worn by the Capuchins unless he were living under the jurisdiction of the Vicar General of the Reform ; whereas he himself was living apart from the community in virtue of the concession granted him by Clement VII. For a long time Matteo de-

bus of October 10, 1536 (Bullar, *Cap.* I, p. 21, Boverius, *ibid.*, XVI), in which Paul III confirms the expulsion of Lodovico from the Order. The Capuchins, however, delayed three months before promulgating the Papal sentence of expulsion and excommunication in the hope that Lodovico would yet relent and submit. cf. P. Edouard d'Alençon, *Tribulationes*, pp. 16-17.

[42] Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, I, p. 472.

[43] So says Paolo da Foligno, fol. 133.

bated within himself, being torn by the contending appeals of his love for the habit and of his call to be a wandering evangelist ; until in his great love for the souls of sinners whom he wished to save he decided to sacrifice the habit and his tie with the Capuchin Reform in order to live in the way that God had called him, and so with mutual regret Matteo and the Reform parted company.[44] The story is unsatisfactory. It does not explain why Matteo returned to the jurisdiction of the Observant superiors, as he undoubtedly did, and yet continued to avail himself of his special privileges. If he could do that under one jurisdiction, he could legally do it under another. Was he won over by Cardinal Quiñones and the Observant General, who, as we know, made every effort to detach the more notable Capuchins from the Reform in the hope that others would follow them ?[45] Matteo, be it remembered, had been drawn into the Capuchin congregation not of set purpose, but more or less unwittingly in the wake of Lodovico and Raffaele da Fossombrone. He had not proposed to himself to initiate a general reform, but to live his own personal life according to the ideal which had come to him. And it may be doubted whether he ever felt himself an effective member of the new congregation. Whatever the reason, Matteo now decided to put himself once more under obedience to the Minister General and so severed his connection with the new Reform.[46] He continued to live the life of

[44] cf. Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, II, p. 603 ; Mario da Mercato-Seraceno, *Descrizione*, loc. cit., p. 18.

[45] In 1540 Clemente de Moneglia on behalf of the Minister General endeavoured to induce Giacomo da Molfetta (vide *infra*) to return to the Observants.

[46] The question of Matteo's return to the Observants cannot be solved satisfactorily until new documents come to light. That he did return to the Observants seems certain, notwithstanding a long-cherished tradition of the Capuchins that he did not entirely sever his connection with the new Reform, but continued in some sort a Capuchin free-lance (cf. d'Aremberg, *Flores Seraphici*, I, p. 4 ; Boverius (*anno* 1537) admits that Matteo went back to the Observants ; Bernardino da Colpetrazzo says he separated from the Capuchins but continued to wear the habit as conceded to him by Clement VII, merely shortening the hood (*Chronica*, II, p. 602).

See also the story of the meeting of Matteo and Lodovico da Fossombrone at Foligno, told by Mario da Mercato-Seraceno (*Descrizione*, loc. cit., pp. 26-27). Boverius gives this incident, but incorrectly says the meeting took place in Rome (Boverius, *anno* 1537, XIII). According to the story, Lodovico was upbraiding the Capuchins when Matteo remarked that neither Lodovico nor himself was worthy of such a devout company. That Matteo's connection with the Observants seemed of the slightest to the people at large, is evident

a wandering evangelist until his death in 1552. He died as he had lived, a homeless friar; dying in the house of a compassionate friend. After his death his body was claimed by the Observants and buried by them in their church in Venice. There his tomb became a place of pilgrimage, and there to-day Capuchin and Observant kneel together in homage to one who, loving peace, became a sign of contradiction to his brethren.

Vittoria Colonna was under no delusion that the danger was over because the Chapter had declared against Lodovico. His rebellion had given the Observants an opportunity and a tool to be used for their own purpose. His discomfiture did not affect their determination, nor deflect them from their purpose. The commission of cardinals was still in being, and Quiñones still hoped to achieve the desired end by its means. Feeling ran high in the Observant Camp, and the refusal of the Capuchins even to consider Lodovico's proposals for reunion only stirred their leaders to a greater resolution; and not a few of their followers to a louder campaign of invective. An incident unfortunate for the Capuchins at this moment was gleefully turned to account by the less responsible members of the Observant party.

During the previous Lent, Bernardino Ochino, the first definitor, had preached a course of sermons in Naples, and a report had got abroad that his doctrine was dangerously

from the story of his funeral. When the Observants claimed his body after his death, the rector of San Moise in Venice at first refused to give it over to them on the ground that those who had done so little for him in life had no claim on him in death. (Wadding, *Annales*, *anno* 1552, p. 257). Nor is the question settled by the letter of obedience said to have been given to Matteo by the Minister General, Lunello, dated May 15, 1536, granting Matteo permission to continue to live according to the concession made to him by Clement VII. The letter is published by Flaminius Cornelius in *Ecclesiae Venetae . . . illustratae in decades tributae*, dec. XI, p. 32 (Venice, 1799). P. Edouard d'Alençon accepts the letter as genuine (cf. *Tribulationes*, p. 17, note 6), and concludes that Matteo left the Capuchin Reform before the date of this letter. But against this we have the evidence of Vittoria Colonna in a letter to Cardinal Contarini which, though undated, could not have been written earlier than July 1536 (vide *infra*). In this letter she says explicitly that Matteo is still a member of the Capuchin congregation—"*fra Matteo . . . il quale vive hoggi e sta fra questi patri.*" Vittoria is usually so well informed as to the internal affairs of the Capuchins at this period that it is difficult to believe she would have been unaware of Matteo's defection had it taken place. Consequently until further light is thrown on the subject I cannot regard the authenticity of the letter as definitely established.

sympathetic to the new doctrines imported into Italy from Germany. This was sufficient to brand the whole body of Capuchins as Lutherans : their refusal to submit to the Minister General was now made clear ; they were afraid lest under his careful discipline their liberty to spread their errors would be curtailed. So persistent was the slander that Bernardino d'Asti protested to Quiñones as protector of the Order and threatened an appeal to the Holy See. The cardinal deprecated this appeal, and undertook himself to admonish the Observant superiors to silence the slanderers.[47] Let it be remembered that the Observants were not of one mind in their campaign against the Capuchins ; nor may the ribald activity of some be charged against the more responsible opponents of the Capuchin Reform. Such Observants as Cardinal Quiñones and the Minister General Lunello were fighting to save the Observant family from utter disintegration, which they knew must follow should the Reform movement be allowed to drift entirely to the Capuchins. Piteous in its obvious sincerity was the alarm felt by many of the more zealous Observants at this juncture.[48] They could not yet see that the independence of the Capuchins would eventually aid the internal reform of the Observant family by forcing the Observants to allow a greater freedom and protection for reform if only to prevent further migrations to the Capuchins. Not yet could a Minister General of the Observants regard the Capuchin Reform as one of the signs of God's favour towards the Order of the Friars Minor, as did the Venerable Francesco Gonzaga, fifty years later.[49] At this period, the main reason which made the Capuchins stand out was their conviction that union with the Observants, instead of helping internal reform, would only result in their own dispersion and the extinction of all reform. They had no faith, in view of past experience, that any promise made them would be carried out. Lunello, the present General, might respect their freedom ; his successor, it was not unlikely, would work to

47 Boverius. Anno 1536. Vittoria Colonna's letter to Contarini (*ut infra*) lends confirmation to Boverius' statement relative to the campaign of slander.

48 See the letter of Fra. Cherubino Lusio da Feltre to Paul III, November 19, 1535, in Tacchi Venturi, loc. cit., pp. 162-163.

49 cf. *De Origine Seraphicae Religionis*, edit. 1589, p. 21. Francesco Gonzaga was Minister General, 1578-1587.

destroy it ; for as yet the general body of the Observants in Italy were still actively opposed to reform.[50] All this must be borne in mind if we are to understand the stubbornness of the struggle.

Vittoria Colonna was well aware of the situation and the active forces behind it. She was under no illusion as to the determination of Cardinal Quiñones to use every means and persuasion to work his purpose. Nor did she consider that the cardinals who favoured the Capuchins were as active on their behalf as they should be. Consequently she now addressed to Cardinal Contarini and the other cardinals a letter of appeal urging them to more decisive action ; and lest they should be influenced, as she feared, by the charges so persistently made against the Capuchins she took up the defence. Her letter was as cogent in its argument as it was passionate in its appeal. After inviting the cardinals to look and see for themselves how humble and devoted in all good works were the lives of these poor friars, she sums up the charges made against them under six headings ; and answers them one by one. The charges were : (1) that the Capuchins were Lutherans because they preached the liberty of the spirit ; (2) that they had subjected themselves to the local bishops ; (3) that they lacked the approbation of the Holy See ; (4) that they refused obedience to the Minister General ; (5) that they wore a habit different from that worn by the body of the Franciscans ; (6) that they received Observants into their congregation. It was indeed unfortunate for the Capuchins that Fra Bernardino Ochino, the greatest preacher of the day, had aroused the suspicion of Gian Pietro Caraffa and his Theatines. But very few, except amongst the enemies of the Capuchins, at this time gave credence to the charge made against him. Nevertheless, it gave point to the general slander. We shall have to deal with this matter later on in this story. Here we but record Vittoria's reply. If to preach the liberty of the spirit be heresy, she wrote, then was St. Francis himself an heresiarch, for it was he who taught his disciples to observe the holy Gospel which repeatedly tells us

[50] See the statement of Vittoria Colonna in a letter to Cardinal Ghinucci as to the treatment at this time of the Riformati in the friary of Santa Cetarina in the province of St. Louis, and of the Reform brethren in the province of St. Anthony. *Carteggio di Vitt. Colonna*, epist. XCVII, p. 164 ; *Tribulationes*, p. 56.

that it is " the spirit which quickeneth," etc. But one has only to look to these friars' lives to observe their humility and obedience, their poverty and charity and their ungrudging labours, in order to know them. As to their subjection to the bishops, is not this ordinance in accord with the mind of St. Francis who in his own day would have his friars observe it? And is it not well known how in every city and diocese scandals and dissensions arise daily because the religious do not obey the prelates? Then it is said that the Capuchins have no written approbation from the Holy See. Have they not the bull of Clement VII and other letters, including the recent letter of the present Pontiff confirming the election of the present Vicar General? But beside these they have the miraculous writings of their own fervent deeds and the bull of the wounds of Christ and the brief of the Stigmata of St. Francis in their souls, confirmed by the daily benedictions they receive from his present Holiness. They accept, too, all those declarations which oblige them to the strict observance of their Rule, but those which relax the Rule they have renounced and still renounce.[51] In answering the charge that the Capuchins refuse obedience to the Minister General and that they admit Observants to their congregation to the scandal of the people, Vittoria follows the same line of argument as in her letter to Paul III. But a trace of sarcasm creeps into her reply concerning the change of habit. " Why all this clamour about the wearing of a habit worn by the great saint, when one sees a thousand habits that are without decency and a thousand varieties of habits worn by religious?" Why then, she asks, should the Capuchins exchange the obedience in which they have lived for ten years with the greatest perfection, in order to satisfy the ambition of those to whom the Generalate has brought such grave injury? She concludes with an impassioned plea that the cardinal will not destroy the Capuchins: they have suffered much already from the cardinal of Santa Croce (Quiñones) and the Minister General. Let these look to the reformation of their own and leave the Capuchins in peace. Now that the cardinals to whom she writes are better informed they will find no excuse before God if they allow themselves to be swayed by human respect; since Christ was not ashamed to

[51] A reference to the ordinance of the late Chapter.

die for us.[52] The effect of these letters was decisive as to the main point at issue. On August 25, Paul III published the bull *Exponi vobis* in which he confirmed and extended the privileges granted by Clement VII in the bull *Religionis Zelus*, and again explicitly placed the Capuchins under the suzerain jurisdiction of the Master General of the Conventuals, thus definitely exempting them from the jurisdiction of the Observants.[53]

(iii)

The main position was won. But Quiñones and the Observants were not yet beaten. The frontal attack repulsed, there remained a strategic movement by which the Capuchins might yet be reduced to comparative impotence and the Observance supremacy as the dominant partner, if not as the ruling power, be yet secured ; and to this Quiñones now bent all his influence. The new move was to starve the Capuchins of their recruits from the Observant family and to prevent their spreading beyond the confines of the Italian provinces.

The question as to the right of the Capuchins to receive Observants in accordance with Canon Law, had, as we have seen, been a continued source of trouble. By Canon Law they undoubtedly had the right ; but successive decrees of the Papal Court had interposed to prevent Observant friars passing over to their ranks. Under Paul III, these decrees were of a temporary character, to allow the Observants a period

[52] See the original text of this letter edited by P. Edouard d'Alençon (from the copy in the Vatican Archives) in *Tribulationes*, p. 31, *seq.* cf. *Carteggio di Vitt. Col.*, p. 110, *seq.*, Fontana, in *Documenti Vaticani d' Vitt. Colonna* (Roma, 1880), dates this letter " *anteriere alla Bolla del* 25 *Agosto*, 1536 !"

[53] *Bullar Cap.* I, p. 17. Wadding, *anno* 1536, XI.

In defining the exact position of the Capuchins in relation to the Conventuals, the Pope made use of almost the very words in which Eugenius IV had defined the dependence of the Observants themselves on the Conventuals in 1446. (*Ut sacra* of January 11, 1446. Wadding, *anno* 1446, XI). Again, in answer to the charge that the Capuchins were violators of the Rule in not obeying the Minister General, Paul III quotes the words of Pius II in defence of the Observants against a similar charge made against them by the Conventuals, in which Pius II declared that the Observants satisfied the obligation of the Rule in obeying their own Vicar-General. (*Circa regularis* of January 12, 1464. Wadding, *anno* 1464, XVIII).

for the establishment of "houses of recollection" which were to be centres of an internal reform. Constantly when the period had elapsed and the houses of recollection had not yet been established, a new decree was obtained allowing the Observants a further period of grace. We have seen how the original commission of cardinals had prohibited the Capuchins from receiving Observants until the work of the commission was concluded. Meanwhile numbers of Observants were clamouring to be allowed to go over to the Capuchin Reform, since no progress was being made towards reform within the Observant family.

It was with no shallow desire of increasing the numbers of the Capuchin congregation that Bernardino d'Asti, the Vicar General, now protested against the privation of the freedom of the Observants who so desired, to embrace the stricter life of the Capuchins. So far was he from any such ambition that at the last Capuchin Chapter a decree was made enjoining the strictest discrimination in the acceptance of postulants who came from the Observants : only the most fervent were to be accepted.[54] But to deny those who sincerely desired to live a more perfect life the freedom to do so, was to Bernardino a denial of the liberty of the Gospel ; an injustice against which his wide charity forced him to protest.

In a letter addressed to one of the cardinals of the Court[55] he protests against these prohibitions as being contrary to both the natural law and the divine, by which all men are called to tend to higher perfection and, according to the words of Christ, to walk by the hard way and to enter by the narrow door. If everyone has a duty to choose the safer path, still more is it the duty of superiors not to stand in their way and impede them. Of a surety those who do hinder them, whoever they may be, will have to render a most strict account to the just judge Christ in the day of judgment. Calmly he discusses the question from the standpoint of Canon Law; then calls attention to the inconsistency of the Observants who themselves receive members of other Orders

[54] This decision of the Chapter is mentioned by Vittoria Colonna in her letter to the cardinals : "*Et questi, per mantenerse, ne acceptariano pochissimi et tutti ferventi, come gia in questo Capitolo hanno expressamente ordinato.*"

[55] The letter is published from an original text in the general archives of the Capuchins by P. Edouard d'Alençon in *Tribulationes*, pp. 42-46. cf. Paolo da Foligno, p. 285.

even when these (as the law allows) have been refused permission by their superiors. Finally he points out that the prohibition of the three cardinals who originally formed the commission is invalid since it was not published and sent to the Vicar General of the Capuchins until after three other cardinals had been added to the commission; and these cardinals had not signed the decree. True, since the decree had been published the Pope had indeed *oracula vocis* allowed certain Observants to pass over to the Capuchins; but such individual permissions did not meet the case. According to the common law and justice all who were sincere in purpose had the right to seek a stricter life and observance; and to deny it to them was against justice and the liberty of Christ.

Vittoria Colonna, too, wrote in the same strain to several of her friends at Court, amongst others to Cardinal Contarini.[56]

Nevertheless on January 4, 1537, Paul III published the brief *Regimini Universalis* whereby it was decreed that neither the Observants nor the Capuchins might pass the one to the other without the written permission of their respective superiors. Observants, however, who desire a stricter observance are to be allowed to betake themselves, with their superior's permission, to some place assigned for the stricter observance, provided they do not change the form of habit which they already wore. Where, however, such places are not already provided, they must be provided for at the next General Chapter. Should this not be done, the Pope will then take care to provide for those who wish to live under the yoke of a more penitential life.[57] Such is the substance of the brief as published. But in the orginal text submitted to the Pope were three extraordinary clauses—the Pope was to deprive himself of the power to grant permissions contrary to this decree, either by word of mouth or in writing; the decree was to remain binding until the question had been considered either in the General Council

[56] See her letter to Ambrogio Recalcati in Tacchi Venturi, loc. cit. p. 30; also her letter to Contarini in *Carteggio di Vitt. Colonna*, p. 93. A more critical text of this letter is published by P. Edouard d'Alençon in *Tribulationes*, pp. 46-47.

[57] *Bullar. Cap.* I, p. 23. Wadding, *anno* 1537, XVII. But see the original unpublished text edited by P. Edouard d'Alençon in *Tribulationes*, pp. 49-51.

shortly to be held or in the forthcoming Chapter of the Observants ;[58] and until the General Council or the Chapter of the Order should be held, the Capuchins were to remain "in the state in which they now are" nor were they to establish themselves beyond the Alps. These three clauses were deleted before the brief was published, probably owing to a protest on the part of some of the cardinals.[59] The first draft of the decree was in fact an effort on the part of Cardinal Quiñones to neutralise the bull *Exponi vobis* and to reopen the whole case of the Capuchins. Quiñones failed to gain his more ultimate objective ; but he closed the door against further migrations of Observants to the Capuchin Reform. And he gained a second point when, on January 5, a Papal brief was published forbidding the Capuchins to establish themselves beyond the Alps.[60] Quiñones thus gained much even if not all he aimed to gain. Yet the Observants were not satisfied ; they pressed for a decision that those of their family who had already entered the Capuchin Reform during the past year with permission of the Pope, should now be ordered to return to the Observant communities ; but to this the Pope refused his assent.[61]

The General Council of the Church to which the case between the Observants and the Capuchins was now referred, was to have met in Mantua in May, but owing to political difficulties the Council was postponed. Nor did the Chapter of the Observants which was to have been held in 1538 take place. This meant a further postponement of the settlement of the controversy. It also meant a further upheaval amongst the Observants themselves ; for those

[58] i.e. the Chapter of the Cismontane Observants, which was due in 1538. The General Council had been convoked by Paul III on June 4, 1536, to assemble at Mantua on May 23, 1537. After being several times postponed, it eventually was opened at Trent on Dec. 13, 1545.

[59] A marginal note added by Cardinal Contarini states that he knew nothing about the proposal that the Capuchins should not establish themselves beyond the Alps. According to Fabricio Peregrino, ambassador of the Duke of Mantua, Paul III, on December 15, 1536, had added three more cardinals to the commission (cf. P. Edouard d'Alençon, *Tribulationes*, p. 46), but only the names of the six cardinals already forming the commission appear in the original text of the brief of January 4.

[60] The brief *Dudum siquidem* of January 5, 1537. *Bullar. Cap.* I, p. 23. Wadding, *anno* 1537, XVIII (where, however, the date is given erroneously as Jan. 3).

[61] cf. *Tribulationes*, p. 51, note 4.

who were anxious for internal reform again met with the usual postponement ; and not a few were clamouring to be allowed to join the Capuchins. An attempt was now made to induce a number of Capuchins to come and live in Observant friaries with a view to reforming them ; and thus, so it was said, to bring about a division amongst the Capuchins themselves.[62] To the eyes of Vittoria Colonna the situation was still critical for the Reform. Not only were the Capuchins threatened by insidious attempts to undermine them ; but it is evident from a letter she now addressed to Paul III, that a new campaign of slander was on foot, accusing the Capuchins of sympathy with the heretics and of a rebellious attitude towards the Holy See. The letter is characteristically outspoken and direct. She has learned, she writes, that the General of the Observants has been laying information against the poor friars he wishes to destroy. Let His Holiness if he wishes to know the true character of these poor friars send two impartial agents to all the cities of Italy and he will learn in what esteem they are held ; how stoutly they oppose the heretics, and how in all things they obey the wishes of the Sovereign Pontiff. If indeed it is the will of His Holiness that the Capuchins be destroyed, let him do it with his own hand and not through the agency of another ; but in that case Vittoria will journey about calling upon all good men to leave Italy where they can no longer remain, since His Holiness will do nothing to put down the wicked. But she trusts in his wisdom, since once the truth is brought to light, lies will fail. Needful is it that His Holiness should impose silence on those who, having already caused the door to be closed, now daily cause new troubles that they may destroy those whose exemplary life does not suffice to save them.

The storm now subsided for a time ; maybe the Pope, persuaded by Vittoria Colonna and the cardinals favourable to the new Reform,[63] made it known that the provisional settlement agreed upon by the commission of cardinals must be observed and no further attempt made to anticipate

[62] Tacchi Venturi, loc. cit., p. 32. *Tribulationes*, p. 54.

[63] It would seem from Vittoria Colonna's letter to Cardinal Trivulzio that he was actively in favour of the Capuchins. The Chronicles also mention Cardinal Sanseverino as actively sympathising with their cause.

the appeal to the General Council and the Chapter of the Order. Now and again echoes of the controversies break the silence ; [64] but the Pope would not allow the truce to be broken. Cardinal Quiñones died on October 27, 1540. It is said that as he lay in his last sickness he sent to ask the prayers of the Capuchins, promising that if he recovered he would show a more paternal regard for them than he had shown hitherto.[65]. He had been a fierce but honourable opponent ; and as such the Capuchins respected him.

Quiñones did not live to witness the failure of the General Chapter of 1541, in the matter of the promised reform. The Chapter met at Mantua and not at Rome as the Pope had wished. No provision was made either to inaugurate the reforms decreed so long ago by Clement VII or to arrive at some settlement with the Capuchins. In consequence some of the Observants considered that the prohibition against their passing over to the Capuchin Reform now ceased, and a new migration was only prevented by a Papal prohibition.[66] Not until twelve years later was any attempt at a general reform of the Cismontane Observants taken in hand by Capitular authority.[67] But it was chiefly in the "houses of recollection" that the reform took root, where the Riformati, as the friars in these houses were called, began rapidly to increase in numbers. The decrees prohibiting Observants from passing over to the Capuchins undoubtedly helped to swell the numbers of the Riformati ; towards the end of the century they formed no inconsiderable body amongst the Italian Observants. Yet the old difficulties still remained, and in 1579 the Riformati found it necessary to form themselves into a congregation practically distinct from the "Observants of the commu-

[64] Thus a brief of August 3, 1539, again forbids the Capuchins to receive Observants. See the text of this brief in *Tribulationes*, pp. 58-59. The original text is in the Vatican Archives. Again, a similar brief was issued on August 5, 1541. cf. *Tribulationes*, p. 59. Yet in this same year permission was granted to the Reformed Conventuals in Spain to admit Observants to their congregation.

[65] Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, p. 1390.
cf. *Tribulationes*, p. 38, note 6.

[66] Brief *Cum Autem*, August 5, 1541, *ut supra.*

[67] At the Chapter held at Salamanca Constitutions were drawn up for the Observants of the Cismontane family, which included the provinces of Italy and Eastern Europe. They were promulgated by the Minister General Clemente Dolera, in 1554.
Wadding, *anno* 1553, XVIII.

nity," though they continued to acknowledge the Minister General as their Visitor and the head of the Order.[68] The Capuchins had not suffered in vain. In winning their own freedom for a stricter observance, they at the same time opened the way to reform for others ; it might in truth be said that in separating from the Observants they saved the Observant family more effectively than had they submitted to the Observant rule. And so in the end, notwithstanding the bitterness of the contest whilst it lasted, the Capuchins deserved well of their Observant brethren, as some of these eventually and generously acknowledged. Indeed, bitter though the contest was, in the suffering it caused to many, between the Capuchins and their opponents, at least those of the " internal reform " party, there was throughout a strong sense of spiritual kinship and underlying charity ; as was manifested in their more private relations. Between these the chief bitterness of suffering lay in the enforced separation for truth's sake, as each conceived the truth.[69]

(iv)

It was well for the Capuchin Reform that during the great crisis through which it had passed, the leadership was in the hands of so prudent a leader as Bernardino d'Asti. He was a man of wonderfully calm temperament, sagacious and far-seeing ; one whose heart was set on the truth of things and not on appearances ; a man fearless in this reverence for the truth and in the simplicity of his loyalties : consequently deeply humble without servility ; utterly candid and without thought of self. He was, too, a man of vast charity ; yet virile and strong in his charity as he was in his love for the truth. He lived much within himself, spending hours daily in prayer and in pondering on the Sacred Scriptures, however pressing and multitudinous the external activities to which his charity and duty called him. His

[68] cf. Wadding, *anno* 1579, XX. Eventually the three reformed congregations of Observants, the Riformati, Discalceati and Recollets, far outnumbered the Observants of the community. In 1710 the Riformati alone numbered 30,050 friars in 1432 convents. (Diomede Falconio, op. cit., p. lxx.)

[69] See *infra* the relations between Francesco da Jesi and the Venetian Riformati. Vol. II., Appendix II.

brethren loved him with a reverential love, as one on whom they could depend for wise counsel in an emergency and for sustaining sympathy in trouble. His calm strength was felt by all in the shock caused to the brethren by the apostasy of Lodovico da Fossombrone. To many of them it seemed for a moment as though the ground they stood on had suddenly become unstable. It was Bernardino's quiet strength which reassured them. In the bewilderment which followed the catastrophe some were for accepting the project of reunion with the Observants : Matteo da Bascio, as we have seen, did return to the Observant jurisdiction. Bernardino's unwavering conviction in the righteousness of the Capuchin cause, as the sole hope of reform in the Order, rallied the brethren and saved the Reform from extinction.

As soon as circumstances permitted, Bernardino undertook a general visitation of the brethren. Notwithstanding the efforts made to prevent their progress, the Capuchins now had settlements in Sicily, Tuscany, Lombardy and Genoa ; they had increased in numbers in the Marches of Ancona, in the Roman province and in Calabria.[70] Bernardino's personal presence and encouragement was needed to calm their spirit and to encourage them individually and corporately to adhere to the stricter observance they had embraced, and to re-establish the common discipline which had suffered under Lodovico's erratic government and since his rebellion. His own example was his most convincing argument. He travelled from house to house on foot, never taking provisions with him on his journey but trusting in God's Providence to give shelter and food on the way. When he arrived at a

[70] Settlements were made in Sicily with the encouragement of Cardinal Palmerio who actually offered the Capuchins the monastery of the Holy Trinity at Mileto ; but this the friars refused as not being in keeping with Franciscan poverty. (cf. *Litterae P. Ludovici Rhegini* in *Tribulationes*, p. 60.) In 1537 the hermitage of Monte Casale, sacred to St. Francis, was given for their use with the approbation of Paul III (cf. *Bullar. Ord. Cap.* I, p. 101). A new house had been given them in Rome by the Colonna, at the church of San Nicola di Portiis (cf. *Carteggio di Vitt. Colonna*, p. 124) ; P. Edouard d'Alençon : *La Chiesa di S. Nicola di Portiis* (Roma, 1908). At Siena a house was given them by the city at the instance of Cardinal Piccolomini (Sisto da Pisa : *Storia dei Cappuccini Toscani*, I, p. 51). There was a friary at Porlezza in the diocese of Milan in 1540, (Valdemiro da Bergamo : *I Conventi e I Cappuccini dell' Antico Ducato di Milano* (Crema, 1894, I, p. 37) ; at Brescia in 1536 (Valdemiro da Bergamo : *I Conventi e I Cappuccini Bresciani*, Milano, 1891, p. 13) ; in Genoa in 1538 (P. Francesco Zaverio Molfino : *Codice Diplomatico dei Cappuccini Liguri*, Genova, 1904, p. 103).

friary or a hermitage it was as a pilgrim often footsore and weary in body but blithe in spirit. In after years stories were told of these journeys which recall the simple and merry spirit of the *Fioretti*.

One such story was that of the innkeeper at whose expense Bernardino and his companion dined. They had arrived hungry at the inn and had called for food. The innkeeper supplied them with a frugal but sufficient meal, and when they had eaten he came demanding payment. Bernardino reminded him that they were poor friars and had no money ; but the innkeeper was insistent that they must pay since they had eaten. Whereupon Bernardino produced a slip of paper and wrote on it the prayer *Retribuere*, begging God to bless all who in a kind spirit do kind acts unto us. " That paper," said Bernardino, " is worth a hundred pence in the bank of heaven." The innkeeper took it doubtfully, yet being a good Christian dared not refuse it as payment ; and so the friars departed. But the next day a cardinal and his suite called at the inn. The innkeeper gave them of his best and himself waited upon them. But when at the end of the meal the cardinal rose and in stentorian tones intoned the prayer *Retribuere*, as is the manner of clerics, the innkeeper fell into a cold sweat. " Now am I caught again with their notes on the bank of heaven," he exclaimed, " and meanwhile they have eaten of my best." Whereat the cardinal, astonished, asked the cause and meaning of his words ; and the innkeeper explaining, received a fat purse as part-payment for the banquet he had provided.[71]

Bernardino's first act on arriving at a friary was to visit the Church and there pray for the brethren of the place. He would allow no special provision to be made for him as to either food or accommodation ; but shared the food and lodging of the community, making himself in every way one with them as the humblest amongst them. Nor did he order this or that to be done as though he were the master ; but his orders were given as admonitions of a brotherly love, as of a fellow disciple voicing the consciences of all. He was rigid as to poverty, it was said, but large in charity. A saying of his was treasured : " We who are in health can never

[71] See the story as told by P. Carolus d'Arembergh : *Flores Seraphici* (Coloniae Agrippinae, 1640), I, p. 20.

cherish poverty enough ; but towards the sick and feeble even poverty must be a generous giver." But rigid as he was, he would yet have a reasonable mean : "Never more than is needed ; never less than is sufficient." Of his love of poverty, this is recorded. On his visit to the brethren of Santa Lea in the Marches of Ancona he found the friary of larger dimensions and built more solidly than was the rule of the Capuchins. He learned that the townspeople of the place who built the house insisted on thus building it. Bernardino could not approve, yet as it belonged to the townspeople he could not destroy ; but he prayed to the Lord to deal with it as was His will. Shortly afterwards it was damaged in a great storm and the friars had to desert it.[72]

Thus under his guidance and personal persuasiveness the new congregation attained to a corporate self-consciousness which it had hitherto lacked, and to a definite internal discipline which responded to its high ideals. And for this reason, notwithstanding the efforts made to discredit it and destroy its independence, the congregation gained in the estimation not only of the common people, but of those in high authority ; so that amongst the cardinals at the Papal Court, not a few actively supported the Capuchins, and were anxious for their increase. Cardinal Contarini, as we have seen, did not approve when they were forbidden to take houses on the further side of the Alps. Giberti, the reforming bishop of Verona, was throughout in sympathy with them,[73] and so was Cardinal Gonzaga, Archbishop of Mantua.[74] The storm which had shaken them left them more solidly established both as to internal discipline and in public repute.

And yet another storm was even now brewing in a quarter none suspected — at least none amongst the friars, nor amongst the ruling powers in the Church—a storm that was to bring the Capuchin bark very nigh to destruction.

[72] cf. *Relazione del luogo di Commenzone,* in *Anal. Ord. Cap.*, vol. xxiv, p. 23. Santa Lea was probably a corruption of Sant' Elia. According to another account, the friary destroyed was at Mogliano near Fano, whilst Santa Lea was built to replace the destroyed friary. cf. *Anal. Ord. Cap.*, loc. cit., p. 29.

[73] cf. Epist. LXVI, Vitt. Colonna in *Carteggio,* p. 100.

[74] cf. Vittoria Colonna's letters to Card. Gonzaga.

CHAPTER IV

THE APOSTASY OF FRA BERNARDINO OCHINO

(i)

Fra Bernardino Ochino da Siena was elected Vicar General of the Capuchins at the General Chapter held in Florence at the Feast of Pentecost 1538. Bernardino d'Asti, in the course of his second visitation of the brethren in the Marches of Ancona, had been struck down on his arrival at Fano, with what seemed a mortal illness; and he had despatched Frat'. Eusebio d'Ancona to Bernardino Ochino bidding him as first definitor convoke the Chapter; for he was fearful lest even for awhile "the little ship threatened by storms should be left without a helmsman."[1] Next after Bernardino d'Asti no friar was held in greater esteem for his religious character than Ochino; added to this was his commanding personality and his high reputation as a preacher.[2] Even in the days of the great trouble under Clement VII, the people of Rome had crowded to his sermons in the church of San Lorenzo in Damaso during the Lent of 1534. Since then his reputation as a preacher of singular power had been growing. One who heard him preach in San Giovanni Maggiore at Naples in 1536 said: "he preaches with such power that he makes even the stones weep."[3] But it was not merely his moving eloquence which made men hang upon his words, and even compelled the frivolous to listen. With a simple directness he laid bare the insincerities which too frequently did duty for religion; nor did he palliate the unreal sentimentalism which did

[1] Boverius, *anno* 1538, IX.

[2] cf. Mario da Mercato-Seraceno, *Narratione*, cart. 204: "*E fer tanto il suo nome e la sua fama che beati erano chiamati i frati cappuccini ch' haveano un tal huomo nella religion loro.*"

[3] Gregorio Rosso, cf. Karl Benrath: *Bernardino Ochino of Siena* (Eng. Transl. by Helen Zimmern, London, 1876), p. 21, note 2.

duty for a living, intelligent faith. "Of what use is it," he asks, "to wear a crucifix if we do not remember that we are partakers by our sins in the guilt of the Crucified's death? What sincerity is there in the confession of a man who, acknowledging his meanness in confession, resents being accused of it by his neighbour?" Relentlessly he searched the consciences of his hearers. Yet he was not merely critical. A certain mystical fervour lit up his exposition of the faith and of Christian conduct; and it was this, even more than his outspoken censure of the insincerities of many who professed the faith, which drew to him such earnest souls as Vittoria Colonna and her friends. His personal life gave weight to his words. Amongst his brethren in the Capuchin congregation, none was more austere than he, none more observant of the Rule and religious discipline. Even when he was preaching daily during Advent or Lent, he fasted rigorously, and his constant journeys were made on foot. When staying in the houses of the rich, he refused the comfortable bed, and slept on a hard mattress, or on the floor; and at table seldom took more than one dish.[4] His compassion for the poor induced him frequently to pause in his sermons and recommend their needs to the generosity of his audience. His sympathy with the sick-poor showed itself in his letter to the Compagnia di San Domenico at Siena, when he urged its members to visit the city hospitals; "for these sick men are only waited on by hirelings who are without love and give them no word of comfort, so that their souls are often more sick than their bodies."[5]

With good reason then did the electors at the Chapter look to him as one who "would make a perfect Vicar General"; and indeed his government during the three years that followed justified their election. His first act was to confirm the ordinances made by his predecessor for the better government of the brethren; and in his conduct as Vicar General he faithfully followed in Bernardino d'Asti's footsteps.[6] Under the leadership of Ochino the congregation continued to gain in the estimation of the people and

[4] So writes Graziani, secretary to Cardinal Commendoni (cf. *Vita Cardinalis Commendoni* ii, cap. 9).

[5] *Compagnia di San Domenico: Libro dello Deliberazioni*, del 1540, quoted by Benrath, loc. cit., p. 25.

[6] Boverius, *anno* 1538, XI.

in the number of its foundations. Just before his election he himself had gained a house for the brethren at Venice on the conclusion of his Lenten course of sermons. The Observant friar, Fra Bonaventura, whom we have met with in the affair of the Venetian Chapters,[7] after listening to Ochino's sermons, offered him with the consent of the Senate the small church and house of Santa Maria degli Angeli. Bernardino d'Asti, then Vicar General, accepted the gift and sent friars there. When shortly afterwards the pestilence broke out in Venice these friars, assisted by others sent to their aid, gave themselves to the service of the stricken inhabitants, and thus gained the gratitude of the city.[8]

About the same time that the friars were established in Venice a community of Reformed Conventuals at Sant' Angelo in Vado, in the Marches of Ancona, passed over to the Capuchins, after having attended the Lenten course preached by Giovanni da Fano in the town. These and other foundations took place whilst Bernardino d'Asti was Vicar General; but of not less importance were those which followed when Bernardino Ochino became the guiding spirit. When in June the Pope came to Genoa after his attempted reconciliation of the emperor with the French king, he was petitioned by the rectors of the hospital for incurables to allow them to invite the Capuchins to take over a house built for the Dominicans in that city. Four years previously, at the dispersion of the Roman community by Clement VII, some Capuchins had come to Genoa, and their devotion to the sick had left a grateful memory in the minds of the citizens. The rectors of the hospital therefore pleaded that the friars might be allowed to make a permanent settlement for service in the hospital. Paul III granted the request and the Capuchins shortly afterwards were established there.[9]

In 1540 Bernardino Ochino sent a Fra Mariano to plant the Reform in Corsica, where it quickly took root, and earned the gratitude of the bishops for the good work the friars did

[7] See *supra*, p. 75.

[8] Boverius, *anno* 1538, XII.

[9] Boverius, *anno* 1538, IV-V. F. Z. Molfino, op. cit., *ut supra*. It may be mentioned here that at Genoa and in many of the Italian cities the Capuchins still act as chaplains to the hospitals and prisons. They live in houses attached to the hospital, and give their entire services to the sick.

in reviving the faith of the people.[10] About the same time Fra Giovanni Battista of Florence was sent with companions to establish the congregation at Piedmont. Fra Giovanni Battista was a bold man ; he won the respect of the people of Turin by courageous defiance of the captain of the French troops who held the citadel, Vico d'Asti, some little distance from the city, and whose exactions and oppression were the terror of the country around. Fra Giovanni Battista sought him out and upbraided him for his tyranny; the captain answered the friar with contemptuous disdain and pillaged the neighbourhood all the more cruelly. Thereupon the friar denounced him publicly in a sermon. The captain retorted by demanding a public withdrawal under threat of further reprisals. Fra Giovanni Battista sent answer that if the captain would be present in the church on the following day he would give him the satisfaction he desired. The captain came and Giovanni Battista ascended the pulpit. Turning towards a crucifix that stood near, the friar besought the Crucified whose messenger he was, to answer for him. " Thou knowest, Lord," he prayed, " that I spoke but the message I believed to be Thine ; do Thou now manifest whether I spoke truly." Those present believed that they saw the head of the Crucifix bow in sorrowing approval of the friar : even the captain was disturbed in mind and went out, leaving the friar unharmed. Shortly after this the captain was killed in a skirmish and the citadel was set on fire by lightning in a great storm and totally destroyed. So runs the story as the people told it in telling how Fra Giovanni Battista and his Capuchins came amongst them.[11]

At Siena too, the city, proud of its citizen whose fame added to its glory, welcomed a settlement of friars.

It was during Ochino's government that the community of Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis in Naples, formed by the Spanish lady, Maria Longa, adopted the Rule of St. Clare and instituted a new reform of the Poor Clares inspired by the life and constitutions of the Capuchins. The Capuchinesses, as they came to be called, were

[10] In 1543 when the Capuchins were forbidden to preach by Paul III, the Bishop of Corsica petitioned that an exception should be made in regard to the friars in Corsica.

[11] Boverius, *anno* 1540, VI-VII.

approved by Paul III, who, on December 10, 1538, appointed the Capuchins to serve the convent as chaplains and spiritual directors.[12]

Thus the Capuchin Reform continued to take root, and Ochino's growing reputation as a preacher cast a reflected glory over the congregation. Yet, ominous signs of a coming storm might have been detected, had it not been that at this period Ochino was almost universally held to be a man of high sanctity and single purpose. Moreover, amongst those who were eagerly looking for a renovation of the spiritual life of the Church there was as yet no disposition to criticise too closely " the new teaching " which infused a breath of life into the arid bones of the conventional system ; the earnest reformers, most of them at least, were grateful for every sign of a new spring ; they accepted the gift without too closely scanning it with an eye to heterodoxy. They had not yet arrived at the parting of the ways which was to separate many from those with whom they were now working in good faith and with a simple earnestness for the redemption of Israel. So it came about that when the Capuchins next met in General Chapter in 1541, Ochino was re-elected Vicar General in spite of his manifest reluctance to accept the election. His reluctance was taken as a sign of humility and that made him all the more desirable to the brethren who elected him.

(ii)

Ochino had come into a blaze of publicity by his sermons at San Lorenzo in Damaso in Rome in 1534 and the following year, when his eloquence and spiritual fervour attracted even cardinals and prelates to attend his sermons ; nor were these repelled by his denunciations of the scandals and worldliness which were rife amongst the prelates and the leaders of Roman society. " His sermons," wrote one of these, " set forth the Gospel and show what a Christian life should be ; he is not afraid to say what is necessary for the salvation of his hearers and sharply blames those in high

[12] *ibid., anno* 1538, XIII.

places."[13] Before he joined the Capuchins he had already gained repute as a preacher, but his passing over to the Reform had stirred new depths in him and given him a greater fearlessness. In 1536, when he preached the Lent in the church of San Giovanni Maggiore at Naples, suspicions were first cast upon his orthodoxy and the Spanish viceroy intervened and forbade the continuance of the course; but Ochino so completely vindicated himself that the ban was withdrawn. His friends attributed the trouble to the jealousy of other preachers in the city;[14] and this may well have been the case. Yet it was probably at this time that Ochino first came into contact with Juan Valdez, a Castilian gentleman, who, with his brother, Alfonso, had followed the emperor to Naples in 1529. In an age when those who affected to be gentlemen showed little regard for morals, Juan Valdez was of irreproachable purity of life. His delicate ascetic appearance bore the impress of one given to high thoughts, his charm of manner won all hearts. His mind was tinged with mysticism; his earnestness and sincerity were beyond doubt. He was a scholar of the type of Erasmus; but he had that almost oriental cast of thought, common amongst the Spanish thinkers of the period, which suspects a too defined logical clearness and prefers the illimitable vastness. Like so many who felt deeply in matters religious, he was in revolt against the shallow externalism which dominated the religious thought and conduct of the day.

For a time he had been in the service of Clement VII, and whilst in Rome had come into contact with minds kindred to his own. On the death of that Pontiff he returned to Naples and there became the centre of a coterie somewhat similar to the company of the Oratory of Divine Love which had done so much to foster the reforming spirit in Rome before the Sack. Not a few of the Roman society, and amongst them Vittoria Colonna and Caterina of Camerino, now associated with the Neapolitan circle. Of this informal society Valdez was the revered master and prophet; all the other members gladly acknowledged themselves his disciples.

[13] Agostino Gonzaga in his report of March 12, 1535; Luzio, *Vittoria Colonna*, p. 26.

[14] *Carteggio di Vitt. Colonna*, p. 138, *seq.* So also Gregorio Rosso, in Benrath, loc. cit., p. 68, note.

They were a distinguished body who assembled in Valdez' house at la Chiaio ; the noblest families, Colonna, Caraccio-lio, Gonzaga, Caraffa and Cibo were there represented ; there, too, were to be found such ardent intellectuals as Pietro Martire Vermiglio and Marc' Antonio Flaminio. It was a group very different in character from the Roman Oratory of Divine Love ; it lacked men of action and was composed almost entirely of intellectuals and women enthusiasts ; fervently religious in purpose, clean-living, mentally alert ; just such a body as in the circumstances of the time might easily diverge into heresy or religious fanaticism ; very certainly they were not content "to drink, eat and sleep," and take the pleasures of life with an easy conscience.[15]

It is difficult to determine how far Valdez considered himself an innovator in his religious teaching ; or whether he considered himself an innovator at all. His fundamental principle was that all good in man comes from the grace of Christ and that this grace is appropriated by each one individually by means of a living faith. To live by faith in Christ, so that Christ may live in us, is the cardinal factor in the Christian life. Such faith can only be realised by a mortification of the senses and self-discipline. To recognise the vanity of the world and detach oneself from it, to know God through Christ and to lose oneself in God, to cultivate interior faith, hope and charity—in this consists the beginning of the spiritual life ; to attain perfection one must destroy all self-will and withdraw from all sense-pleasure, and finally one must live always in spirit in the presence of the Crucified.[16] His insistence on a living faith as the channel of the grace of Christ seemed to his opponents dangerously similar to Luther's teaching, though Valdez was careful to dissociate himself from agreement with Luther's doctrine and methods. He did not deny the value of good works ; for good works he held were the natural outcome of a living faith ; without charity a living faith is impossible. But the impression he gave his disciples was that good works

[15] In 1547 Cardinal Ercoli Gonzaga wrote of certain religious in Mantua that there was no danger of them becoming Lutherans since "they had no other interest but to drink, eat and sleep." cf. Buschbell, *Carte Cerviniane*, p. 238, 278, quoted by E. Rodocanadi, *La Reforme en Italie*, vol. i, p. 126.

[16] cf. Rodocanadi, op. cit.

in themselves are not meritorious. As Pietro Carnesecchi, one of his disciples, confessed to the Inquisitors, Valdez did not pursue his teaching concerning justification by faith to its logical conclusions ; it was his disciples who emphasised its actual or possible unorthodox implications.[17] Outwardly at least he was a good Catholic, punctiliously fulfilling the precepts of the Church ; but his exposition of the Sacraments left a suspicion that he took them as symbols or seals of faith rather than in the full sense of Catholic teaching. There can be no doubt that many of Valdez' friends were unaware of any unorthodox tendency in his expositions of Christian doctrine. The doctrine concerning justification by faith in Christ, it must be remembered, had not yet been defined by the Council of Trent ; and as against the unspiritual externalism which stood for religion with most people at the time, the teaching of Valdez and others of like mind, had an attraction for the spiritually minded.[18] Moreover, these new teachers based their expositions—they were hardly arguments—upon the words of Sacred Scripture: and this reversion to the Scriptures was in itself refreshing to minds wearied with the speculative inanities or ribald jokes which were the stock-in-trade of the ordinary preacher.[19] The religious atmosphere in such circles as that of Juan Valdez and his associates was tense ; caught up into a more elevating thought and emotion the ardent revivalists did not stop to criticise ; they just wanted to live ; and all might have gone well had not the disrepute, into which the rulers had fallen, led many to challenge their authority itself.

Already when Bernardino Ochino first preached in Naples, in 1536, it would seem, certain ecclesiastics and the civil authorities were uneasy in regard to the movement

[17] cf. *Dal com pendio de processi del Sant' Uffizio, Carteggio di V. Colonna*, App. II.

[18] Amongst the treatises setting forth " the new doctrine," one of the most popular was that entitled *Del Beneficio di Jesu Cristo Crocifisso*, published at Venice in 1540. Such stout Catholics as Cardinal Badia, O.P., master of the Pontifical Palace, and Cardinal Morone highly approved of it. Yet others saw in it a nest of Lutheran errors.

[19] " What am I to do with sermons?" the famous humanist, Pietro Bembo, is reported to have asked. " One hears nothing else than the *doctor subtilis* inveigh against the *doctor angelicus*, and then Aristotle comes in as a third and puts an end to the dispute " (Ortensio Landi, Parad. II, 29, quoted by Benrath, loc. cit., p. 37). The sermons of the Dominican popular preacher, Barletta, gave rise to the slang phrase, " to barlettise," that is to brawl theatrically.

inspired by Valdez ; by 1539 when Ochino again preached in the city, Gian Pietro Caraffa and his Theatines were on the watch for heresy ; they were the more alarmed because of the increasing number of adherents to the new doctrine, for Valdez, though a layman, preached frequently to the people both in the churches and in the public streets.[20]

Ochino's friendship with Valdez brought him under the suspicion of the Theatines who sent secret agents to listen to his sermons and make notes of his teaching ; they even questioned their penitents who attended the sermons as to the impressions made on them. But at this time no definite charge could be made against him.

In the meantime he had preached the Lenten course at Venice at the invitation of Cardinal Pietro Bembo and other notable citizens.[21] Whilst the course was still proceeding, Bembo wrote to Vittoria Colonna ; " I confess I have never heard more useful or wholesome sermons. I do not wonder at your affection for him . . . when he leaves here he will carry all hearts with him."[22] Such was the impression made that a collection of the sermons was two years later published in Venice.[23] Even in cold print the sermons have a simple majesty of diction ; there are no flowers of rhetoric ; every sentence is chastely chiselled to convey the preacher's thought ; a restrained emotion vibrates throughout, yet there is no blatant attempt at effect. The language is simple and direct. So much for the form. But clothed in this eloquent simplicity, the thought compels attention ; it is the living thought of one who has passed his doctrine through the crucible of his own thought and experience. In these sermons Ochino certainly does not belittle the duty of the Catholic Christian to obey the commands of the Church ; it is the duty of everyone, he says, to go to confession as the Church ordains. Referring to the doctrine of transubstantiation, " How can you prove," he asks, " that

[20] According to Caricciolo *Vita Pauli IV* (quoted by Benrath, p. 63), Valdez had 3,000 adherents in Naples, but Pastor, *History of the Popes* (Engl. Trans.), vol. xii, p. 494, considers the numbers given by Protestant Reformers as " a gross exaggeration."

[21] *Vide* Bembo's letter to Vitt. Colonna : *Carteggio*, p. 158.

[22] *ibid.*, p. 169.

[23] *Prediche move predicato dal Reverendo Padre Frate Bernardino Ochino Senese* (Venice, 1541).

Christ's body is concealed under the form of read and wine? How can I prove it? Even could I prove it a thousand times, yet would I not, since we are compelled to believe it whether we will or not." In his sixth sermon he categorically affirms in answer to "the heretics" the necessity of confession, of obeying the Pope as Christ's vicar on earth, of fasting and good works, and finally the dogma of purgatory as revealed in holy scripture.

Nevertheless, the main purpose running through the sermons is not so much to insist upon outward observances as to bring men face to face with the truth they profess, to make them scrutinise their consciences in the sight of God, to look to the crucified Christ as the mirror in which a Christian will recognise his own weakness and in whose holiness he will see his own iniquity. Christ is the law by which a Christian must judge himself. "They be but false Christians who do not reflect themselves in the mirror of the crucified Christ; they desire a Christ after their own manner, rich, proud and magnificent." Certainly in these sermons there is no "teaching of heresy."[24]

About this same time Ochino wrote his Seven Dialogues published in 1542.[25] They purport to be conferences which took place between Ochino and Caterina, Duchess of Camerino. In all probability they give us an insight into the inner working of the circle to which Ochino was introduced in his association with Valdez.[26] That the conferences actually took place may be taken as certain since the Duchess Caterina never denied her part authorship. The general theme of the Dialogues is the love of God and our salvation through union with God in Christ. Assuming heretical tendencies in the Dialogues it would be easy to quote passages which confirm the assumption. On the other hand

[24] Some have proposed to detect a certain hesitancy in his answers to the heretical propositions above referred to. For instance, in answering the statement that "we need do no good works because faith alone and not works bring us to salvation," he does not directly deny the proposition, but contents himself with saying: "In any case it is safer to do good works"; he avoids the real issue. So Benrath, loc. cit., p. 88.

But Ochino in this summary of objections which "only proceed from the pride, arrogance and selfishness of the hearts" of the heretics, contents himself with a brief denial of each. A decisive reply would have entailed long argument.

[25] *Dialogi sette del Reverendo Padre, Frate Bernardino Ochino Senese*, Venice, 1542.

[26] See also the two undated letters of Vittoria Colon nain *Carteggio*, pp. 241 and 245.

Ochino's doctrines might well have been drawn from the orthodox mystical writings which he read with avidity when he joined the Franciscan Order. They can well bear an orthodox interpretation. So far then as Ochino's published writings in these years bear witness, there was no definite ground on which to accuse him of heresy ; and but for the events which are to follow, his sermons and dialogues would probably to-day be included in the ascetical literature of the Catholic Reformation.

The effect of the Lenten sermons in Venice in 1539 was to increase Ochino's reputation. Not only did Pietro Bembo express his delight and veneration, and his judgment carried weight with the learned, but the obscene jester, Pietro Aretino, was converted, and for a time at least became a reputable Christian and a writer of religious treatises.[27]

In January 1540, Ochino was again in Naples.[28] The protonotary, Carnesecchi, who heard him preach at this time, declared twenty-seven years later when he was tried before the Inquisition, that Ochino certainly preached justification by faith alone, but so cleverly that only the few could detect it. But Carnesecchi's confessions at his trial need to be carefully scrutinised ; he imputed heterodox opinions or tendencies to many whom we know to have been loyal Catholics, perhaps to justify himself.

Still it is certain from other sources that Lutheran teaching was finding some acceptance with certain of Valdez' associates at this time. Carnesecchi himself had already begun to have doubts concerning the existence of purgatory and the efficacy of confession, though he had no thought of breaking away from the Church. His position at this period was probably that of many among the intellectual reforming party ; their wish and aim was to bring about a change of thought and doctrine within the Church, a change which to their thinking would purify Catholic teaching from the perversions which many read into it, and from which had

[27] Aretino in a florid letter announced his conversion to Paul III, at the same time praying the Pope's forgiveness for his scurrilous attacks on religion. Ochino himself, however, does not seem to have taken Aretino's conversion seriously. See his diplomatic letter of thanks to Aretino for his gift of his commentary on Genesis—in which sarcasm is thinly veiled by courtesy (Benrath loc. cit., p. 94).

[28] See letter of Vittoria Colonna (*Carteggio*, p. 183).

issued the practical abuses which none could deny. In this attitude of mind they felt they were justified in walking warily lest too open an assertion of their opinions should arouse a violent opposition or lead to schism as in Germany. They did not want schism but purification ; they were unaware perhaps that in their assemblies they were already developing a spirit of sectarianism. Nevertheless about this time it is clear that a hardening of the spirit was beginning to manifest itself amongst the intellectuals, owing in part to the growing power and influence of that section of the Catholic reformers led by Cardinal Gian Pietro Caraffa, whose intolerance of any freedom of expression was to cause such dire tribulation later on amongst Catholics themselves. The cleavage in the Catholic reform movement in its opposition to the heretical tendencies, was already beginning to be felt even in the Roman Court. It arose over the attitude to be adopted towards the heretics—whether they should be met by stern repression with recourse, when necessary, to the secular arm, or by a persuasive policy no less uncompromising in principle but relying for its strength upon a progressive intellectual and moral renovation in the Church itself. Caraffa and his party were for stern repression ; Contarini and his party for persuasive measures.

In the panic caused by the overwhelming progress of the Protestant revolt and its appearance in Northern Italy, the Caraffa party eventually gained the controlling influence. Not altogether willingly Paul III revived and remodelled the Roman Inquisition in 1542.[29]

Meanwhile Ochino had been re-elected Vicar General of the Capuchin Reform at the General Chapter held in Naples at Pentecost 1541. The rumour of his unorthodoxy set afoot by the Theatines had evidently found no credence with the friars who elected him. Had they not all been accused of Lutheranism because they laid more stress on the spirit than on the letter? And was it not becoming a common thing for men, of whose orthodoxy no reasonable man could doubt, to be accused of heretical tendencies by those who

[29] See the bull *Cum licet.*

During the reign of Paul III, as Cardinal Seripanda remarked, the proceedings of the Roman Inquisition were marked with moderation and almost leniency. It was after his death and when Caraffa became Pope under the name of Paul IV that its severity became a byword. See Pastor, vol. xii, p. 508.

were opposed to them in either policy or temperament? Moreover, there was Ochino's irreproachable conduct as a religious, his manifest austerity and unremitting labours. Add to this, the favour in which he was held by the Pope himself and by so many of the most zealous reformers in the Church such as Cardinals Contarini and Pole and the austere Giberti, Bishop of Verona. It was even rumoured that his name was amongst those destined for the cardinalate.[30] So Ochino was re-elected Vicar General, though, as we have said, much against his own will.

In the light of later events his reluctance to accept re-election has been attributed to a mock humility, which cloaked a proud ambition. After his apostasy no accusation was deemed too harsh against one who had betrayed the trust placed in him. It is, however, possible that in his reluctance to accept the confidence of his brethren Ochino's better self was asserting itself. There can be no doubt that at this time Ochino was doubtful of himself. He was beginning to realise the gulf between his own intellectual position and that of his fellow friars. His own confession at a later period makes this clear. Not long after he joined the Capuchins, he wrote, his eyes were opened and he recognised three things: that Christ alone is righteousness; that vows of human institution are immoral; and that the Roman Church is an abomination in the eyes of the Lord.[31] If Ochino means that he definitely accepted these views at an early period in his career as a Capuchin, then his life for several years was a marvel of hypocrisy and insincerity, and lends colour to the accusation that his migration to the Capuchins was due to baffled ambition. But one must not take his later confession too literally: in the situation in which Ochino was when he wrote those words, men have a way of reading back into their past a definiteness of view or opinion which really belongs to a final stage. We shall, perhaps, be doing justice to Ochino if we take his confession to mean that he began to have doubts on these three points, not improbably after his first acquaintance with the Naples

[30] Thus Vincenzo da Gatico to the Duke of Mantua, October 24, 1539, quoted by Pastor, vol. xi, p. 487, note 4.

[31] Ochino's letter to Girolamo Muzio, April 7, 1543: *Bernardini Ochini Senensis: Responsio ad Mutium Justinopolitanum* (Venice, 1543).

group in 1536; which doubts gradually became more and more definite as the years went on, developing from vague troublesome thoughts into dogmatic opinions as he found himself compelled to define his mental position more clearly. On the one hand, in his intercourse with Valdez he became acquainted with Lutheran writings,[32] on the other, he was faced with the growing suspicions and charges concerning his orthodoxy and driven to analyse his yet nebulous theories. Meanwhile, like many others, he clung to the Church with a certain loyalty which for a time made him all the more insistent in observing the practices of devotion and asceticism against which his new opinions rebelled; in that lay his hope of eventually bringing into one his divergent loyalties to the Church and to the new doctrines. So it often happens with men when their first loyalties are shaken.

The first weakening in his struggle thus to harmonise his loyalties came after his re-election as Vicar General. He who had hitherto been an example of religious observance to the brethren of his Order, now suddenly began to trouble their minds by his frequent absences from the divine service of prayer; so that after awhile first one brother and then another expostulated with him on the disedification he was giving. His excuse was his incessant external labours for the Order and the constant stream of clergy and laity who came seeking his counsel. When at length the venerable Bernardino d'Asti, now Procurator of the Order, added his voice to those of the others, warning him that he could not govern well unless he prayed and led the brethren by example, Ochino replied: "Know you not that he prays well who works well for others?" Yet either to calm the minds of the brethren,—or it may be to calm his own conscience—Ochino went to the Pope and obtained a dispensation from reciting the Divine Office because of his many occupations.[33]

Thus in the more intimate circle of his own brethren there came about a certain heart-searching and anxiety; and not only they, but others who hitherto had looked to Ochino

[32] The works of Luther and the Protestant Reformers were read and discussed in Valdez' circle. *Bernardino da Colpetrazzo* (I, p. 526), says Ochino had obtained permission from the Pope to read all prohibited books with a view to writing against Luther.

[33] Boverius, *anno* 1541, XII-XIV.

with a reverence and security which admitted of no question, now felt a certain uneasiness. Thus Vittoria Colonna, who had come to sign herself his "most obedient daughter and disciple,"[34] on hearing a friend speak of him as a most godly man, replied, "God grant he may continue so."[35] She would not have answered thus a year or two earlier.

Yet with the public at large Ochino continued to be regarded as the most powerful preacher in Italy and as a man whose high character was beyond question.[36]

The final catastrophe came swiftly. Ochino was again preaching the Lenten course in Venice in the church of Santi Apostoli. A friend of his, the Augustinian Giulio Terensiano, also a preacher of repute, had just recently been condemned for heresy by the Papal nuncio, Fabio Mignatelli, and at the nuncio's demand had been imprisoned by the Council of the Republic. Ochino from the pulpit passionately protested against his imprisonment. "Men of Venice," he cried out, "if such things may happen, what will be the end? O queen of the sea, if thou castest the heralds of truth into dungeons and chains and condemnest them to the galleys, where shall truth find a resting place? Would that the truth might be proclaimed; how many then, who now are blind, would see the light!"[37] It was a daring appeal. The nuncio replied by forbidding Ochino to continue his preaching. This caused a tumult in the city; the Venetians would not lose their favourite preacher. The nuncio gave way before the popular clamour after extracting from Ochino a promise not again to introduce into his sermons any polemical question. But the nuncio reported the matter to Rome. The more acute observers noticed too about this time a change of tone in Ochino's sermons. "He does not preach as he used," wrote one a little later in the year; "he has always Christ on his lips, but he no longer mentions San Geminiano."[38] Yet even so

[34] *Carteggio*, p. 241-245.

[35] Contile, *Lettere* I (Venice, 1563), 9.

[36] Cardinal Caraffa in his letter of bitter reproach to Ochino, 1542, bears witness to the general impression of austerity which Ochino gave until his apostasy. cf. Boverius, *anno* 1542.

[37] Benrath, op. cit.

[38] cf. Grillenzioi's letter to Card. Morone, July 3, 1542, in Benrath, loc. cit., p. 70.

the public at large were unaware of any heretical tendency, nor did his reputation as a preacher suffer. Only in Rome Cardinal Caraffa marked him down as a suspect and the Pope himself was getting alarmed as denunciations of the powerful preacher continued to come in.

Ochino was at Verona in July, staying at the friary. He had assembled a number of the brethren and was giving them a commentary on St. Paul's Epistles. Amongst them were some who avidly drank in his doctrine of justification by the grace of Christ.[39] He was thus engaged when he received a letter from Cardinal Farnese, couched in the most courteous terms, conveying to him an order from the Pope to come to Rome as his opinion was sought on matters of importance. Ochino was alarmed. He replied that he would go, but requested leave to delay his journey till the great heat was over. Meanwhile he sought counsel with the bishop, Giberti, and spoke to him of his fears. When on July 27 another letter arrived from Rome ordering him to come at once, Giberti urged him to delay no longer. "If you are guiltless," he told Ochino, "you have nothing to fear; if you have erred, give the world an example of humility and confess your error."[40] Ochino then set forth, but because of the heat he availed himself of the Pope's permission to do the journey on horseback. At Bologna he had a brief interview with the dying Cardinal Contarini, which increased his anxiety as to the reception awaiting him at Rome.[41] From Bologna he went on to Florence, still with the intention

[39] Some of them followed Ochino in his apostasy; others confessed their former attachment to his doctrine and sought absolution. cf. Mignanelli's letter of Nov. 2, 1542, to Cardinal Farnese, quoted by Pastor, vol. xi, p. 539, note 1; and Cardinal Cervini's letter to Cardinal Carpi of June 27, 1543, *ibid.*, pp. 585-6.

[40] See Giberti's letter to the Marchese del Vasto of Sept. 11, 1542, in Benrath, loc. cit., p. 10. It seems evident from Giberti's letter that Ochino suspected he was called to Rome to answer the charges already made concerning his orthodoxy. At the same time he may have had some thoughts that the cardinal's hat would be given him if he could satisfactorily clear himself. This seems very likely from his own words: "Di poiche cominciarono asuspicare di me Paolo Papa ditto terzo non manco colla sua prudentia d'usar mezzi per tirarmi alle sue voglio con invitarnii a dignita"—quoted by Benrath, loc. cit., p. 104.

[41] What actually took place as regards Ochino's interview with Contarini it is impossible to say with any certainty, so diametrically opposed are the accounts given by different writers. cf. Pastor, vol. xi, p. 491. Dittrich: *Contarini*, p. 849, *seq.*

of proceeding to Rome.[42] But there he fell in with three of the Neapolitan group, Pietro Martire Vermiglio, an Augustinian Prior, Marc' Antonio Flaminio, and Pietro Carnesecchi, all three of a temper akin to Ochino's own at this moment.[43] If Ochino until this meeting was doubtful as to the ulterior motive of his citation to Rome, these three soon convinced him that it was not a cardinal's hat but trial before the Inquisition which awaited him. Pietro Martire, who had himself been cited to appear before the Chapter of his Order to answer the charge of consorting with heretics, told Ochino that were he to go forward to Rome, he would go to prison and perhaps to death. For himself, Pietro Martire had already decided on flight. Ochino dared not now go forward: he was not prepared to submit or recant; he certainly would not humiliate himself before "the Theatine" (Caraffa), nor put himself into his hands. Bitterly he decided on flight. On August 22 he wrote to Vittoria Colonna telling her of his decision, wishful to justify himself in her eyes. The next day he left Florence and took the road to Geneva. He was accompanied by three lay brothers: he had told them he was going to preach to the heretics beyond the Alps, and they, believing he was risking his life for the Catholic faith, gladly consented to accompany him. They discovered his true purpose as they neared the frontier. One of them, Fra Mariano, with tears besought Ochino to retrace his steps. Ochino for awhile seemed overcome with emotion as he looked back on Italy from the mountain pass. Then as the lay brothers were about to leave him he handed the seal of the Order to Fra Mariano and bade him take it to Bernardino d'Asti, the Procurator; then he set forward again towards Geneva and so passed out of the Catholic Church and the Capuchin Order.[44]

Fra Mariano hastened back to Venice with the saddest news (as it seemed to him) that any man could carry. There he placed the seal of the Order in the hands of the

[42] See his letter to Vittoria Colonna of Aug. 22, 1542, *Carteggio*, p. 247.

[43] But Marc' Antonio Flaminio under the influence of Cardinal Pole remained an orthodox Catholic.

[44] Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, I, p. 523, *seq.* Bernardino had the details from Fra Mariano himself. According to Mario da Mercato-Seraceno (*Narratione*, cart. 234-235) Fra Mariano had been a soldier in the wars, he spoke German fluently and knew the lie of the country.

Vicar Provincial and told his story, and at once the Vicar Provincial set off to seek Bernardino d'Asti in Rome. At first the news seemed unbelievable : when it could be no longer doubted consternation spread through the whole Order. None was more fitted to deal with such sorrow than Bernardino d'Asti ; he took the surest means to steady the brethren under the blow that had fallen ; he ordered fasts and prayers that evil might not befall the Order through Ochino's apostasy, and that Ochino himself might be brought back to the fold.

To make matters worse, it soon became evident that Ochino was not without followers amongst the brethren, especially in the Venetian Province. The Father Guardian of Verona, who did not conceal his opinions, was imprisoned by the bishop, hitherto Ochino's friend ; others followed Ochino in his flight.

Of all calamities that could have overtaken the Capuchin Reform—so long tried in the crucible of adversity—this was the saddest and most desperate ; and many asked themselves whether it was possible the Order could now survive ? Indeed for some time its fate was in the balance. The news was brought to Paul III as he was setting out from Perugia to return to Rome. As the Pontiff drew nigh to Spoleto, seeing a Capuchin friary in the distance he exclaimed : " Soon there will be no Capuchins nor Capuchin monasteries."[45] And that was the general opinion as Ochino's apostasy became known. With the fall of Ochino the Order seemed doomed beyond recovery.

(iii)

It is at all times difficult to judge of a man's motives, for the reason that men are seldom dominated by a single motive ; and the apparent motive is often the weakest. I shall, therefore, not attempt to appraise the motives which led Ochino to cast off Rome for Geneva. That at the time of his flight he did not deal honestly with Fra Mariano and his two associates is undeniable ; that for some time before his apostasy he concealed his unorthodoxy and masked his

[45] Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, I, p. 526.

words when preaching, he himself confesses. Yet his confessions, as we have said, must not be taken too literally. After his apostasy he was anxious to defend himself against the charges of inconsistency and thwarted ambition, and to represent himself as a martyr for conscience' sake. His confessions do not always bear examination. Thus he asserts that the letters conveying the command to appear at Rome were written " con furia mirabile,"—" with astonishing fury " ; the letters themselves shew an astonishing courtesy, considering the circumstances. But much allowance may be made for a man in the situation Ochino found himself towards the end. One thing seems evident ; his decision at Florence was made in a panic. The critical moment had come with an unexpected swiftness. Caraffa had scored. Down to the last moment Ochino was the sought-for preacher of Italy. On the very day before his flight, Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga had written to his agent in Rome to invite Ochino to preach in Mantua ;[46] and a few days previously the citizens of Siena were petitioning the Pope to send Ochino to preach in their city.[47] Imagine then the consternation when in September Ochino's flight and apostasy became generally known. Men found it difficult to account for his sudden defection. Many put it down to disappointed ambition, since contrary to expectation he had not been created a cardinal at the Consistory in June.[48] These overlooked his strange outburst in Venice during his Lenten course. But in truth his friends and admirers were bewildered. Some were inclined to think that in his sensitiveness he had taken refuge in flight from the atmosphere of suspicion which the Caraffa party were everywhere raising in regard to the intellectual reformers and to Ochino in particular. The popular feeling which had so long been in his favour now turned bitterly against him ; he had fooled an unsuspicious people, and that they could not forgive.

The sad thing was that others suffered for Ochino's apostasy. It created an atmosphere of distrust ; those who had been friendly with him, even though they at once dissociated themselves from him in his disloyalty to the

[46] cf. Luzio, *Vittoria Colonna*, p. 38.
[47] Pastor, vol. xii, Appendix 16.
[48] cf. Luzio, loc. cit., p. 39, *seq.*

Church, now fell under suspicion with the unthinking sort, even though their loyalty was well known and appreciated by those in authority and in particular by the Pope himself. Such devoted and single-minded Catholics as Cardinals Pole and Morone, and the lady Vittoria Colonna did not escape suspicion. Paul III shielded them by his marked implicit trust; but after his death they were more openly accused.[50]

At this moment, however, it was the Capuchins who had to bear the brunt of the popular ill feeling and suspicion. Forgetful of their self-sacrificing devotion and ministrations, the populace turned upon them with a venomous ill will. When they appeared in the public streets they were hooted and decried as hypocrites and heretics; doors were closed against them and alms refused, so that they came near starving. Even their friends for the most part now viewed them with uneasiness and ceased to defend them.[51] Their enemies openly rejoiced and jeeringly promised to attend their funeral. Only in the cloisters of the Camaldolese monks was sympathy shown them. There earnest prayers arose that the Capuchins might be comforted and saved. At the Papal Court it was accepted as certain that the Capuchins would be summarily suppressed. An Order that could breed such an arch-traitor could not be tolerated. It shows the position held by Ochino in popular estimation that his apostasy should thus summarily be imputed to the whole body of Capuchins. Pietro Martire's apostasy caused no outcry against the Augustinians—nor, for that matter, did Martin Luther's: the defection of Martin Bucer was not urged as a reason for the extinction of the Dominicans. There was not an Order in the Church that was not bewailing the apostasy of some of its more prominent members.

In a public consistory Paul III laid the matter before the cardinals. Nearly all urged the expediency of suppression. Only Cardinal Sanseverino remained silent until at length the Pope called upon him to speak. Sanseverino rose. "Holy Father," he said, "it is in my mind that in seeking to root up the tares we should beware lest we root up also

[50] cf. Luzio, *Vittoria Colonna*, p. 39. For the later accusations cf. *Dal Compendio de processi del Sant' Uffizio, Carteggio di V. Colonna*, App. II, p. 343.

[51] Boverius, *anno* 1542, XLV.

the good wheat. The Order of Capuchins has grown up in the Church of God, resplendent with apostolic zeal, an example of virtue, and until now its fruits have been good. We all have seen it and rejoiced. Since its beginning it has given no cause to be suspected of heresy until this Ochino came ; he is the enemy who has sown tares amongst the wheat. In my judgment it would be wise to institute an enquiry into the lives of the several members of this Order lest we act precipitately in suppressing it."[52] Sanseverino's advice was accepted, and the Pope ordered that all the

ST. PATRICK
Novena, March 9th—17th

be brought from the various before him.

e enquiry was impending, a Timotheo by name, sought ıid charges of heresy against ırticular against the venerable) had on one occasion been ished by Bernardino and had at the last General Chapter, when they elected Ochino f heresy already made against ernardino d'Asti remark that vn heart. Bernardino, called eplied calmly that the electors ainst Ochino, but they also clared Ochino to be above ıttributed to him, he denied o, asked to produce witnesses, ope dismissed the case. Timo- apostatised.[53]

of the superiors before the e Vatican, but for hours they oom. As evening drew on the rumour got abroad amongst the Romans that the Pope had consigned them all to prison ; the Observants, it was said, had been ordered to have habits ready to receive them when they were set free again.

[52] Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, I, p. 529, *seq.*
cf. Boverius, *anno* 1543.

[53] Mario da Mercato-Seraceno, *Narratione*, cart. 246 ; Mattia da Salò, *Historia Capuccina*, II, fol. 25, *a tergo*.

At length, when the friars were thoroughly weary, the Pope came to them, accompanied by Cardinal Carpi, the newly appointed Protector of the whole Franciscan Order. The Pope did not hide his displeasure ; he upbraided the Capuchins and declared that they deserved to be suppressed. At that Fra Francesco da Jesi spoke out—he who had stood well in the Pontiff's favour because of his reputed sanctity—" Holy Father, in the college of apostles there was a Judas ; yet Christ did not dissolve the apostolic college because of the traitor." But the Pope was in no temper to listen to any interruption, and sternly bade Francesco be silent. Yet after awhile he relented in his attitude. " You deserve to be wiped out from the Church," he told them, " but you have one who pleads in your favour, even your father, St. Francis : God wills to save you. I will be your father ; do you be sons to me." He then turned to Cardinal Carpi : " I commend them to your care. Dispose things as you deem best for them." Thus the ending turned to joy the sorrow and consternation into which the beginning of the Pope's speech had cast the listening friars.[54]

Cardinal Carpi proved a good friend. He straightway appointed Francesco da Jesi, for whom he had a great admiration, Commissary General until a Chapter of the Order should be held ; and his sympathy did much to restore to the Capuchins peace of mind. However, because of the popular feeling against them, he bade them cease from preaching until the Pope should again allow them to preach.

At the following Pentecost the Chapter was held and Francesco da Jesi was elected Vicar General with Bernardino d'Asti as first Definitor and Procurator, to the satisfaction of Cardinal Carpi who revered them both.

(iv)

It was a difficult task which confronted the new Vicar General. Not only were the Capuchins in large measure isolated by the turnover in popular opinion, the defection of

[54] cf. Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, I, p. 536 : Mario da Mercato-Seraceno, *Narratione*, cart. 252. Mario had the account of the audience (he tells us) from Eusebio d'Ancona, who was present.
cf. Boverius, *anno* 1542, IX-XII.

many of their former friends and the suspicion in which they were still held at the Papal Court, but the events of the past nine months had wrought a deep depression of spirit within the Reform itself. Not a few of the friars took the prohibition to preach as a mark that the Reform was merely tolerated and might yet be suppressed ; and in consequence some left the Reform and returned to the Observants. Moreover, there was an uneasy feeling amongst the Capuchins themselves as to how far Ochino's opinions had spread and influenced the brethren in Northern Italy, particularly in the Venetian province.[55] Happily Francesco da Jesi was not a man lacking in courage ; but it was a courage derived eminently from the simplicity of his faith and his sanctity. His supernatural goodness was of that diffusive sort which emanates and envelopes like a halo ; so that all who came in contact with him felt it and were dazzled by it. On the day he was installed Vicar General the brethren were convinced that they saw St. Francis appear above him in brilliant light and offer him a pilgrim's staff, saying ; " Francesco, receive this staff and go forth to visit and strengthen your brethren." At another time, when he was preaching to the brethren at Perugia on the occasion of his visitation, the refectory where they were gathered seemed filled with unearthly light. He was, as we have already remarked, a man of intellectual parts as well as of noble birth : yet it was by the light of his holiness that he drew men to him. Between him and Ochino there had long been an indefinable lack of sympathy, as between men of a different spirit.[56]

That he succeeded in the difficult task of strengthening the brethren in the aftermath of their great affliction, later events proved. In his visitation in Northern Italy he brought back to repentance several of the brethren who had followed Ochino, and by his clear and fervid exposition of the faith, steadied the minds of those who, without following Ochino in his apostasy, were yet attracted by his doctrine of justification by faith in Christ's merits. He aroused the brethren, too, out of the timidity which had come upon many in regard

[55] Boverius admits this. cf. *anno* 1543, XXI.

[56] Boverius (*anno* 1543, XXII) says that Francesco da Jesi had for some time not held with Ochino's opinions and that this was well known to Cardinal Carpi.

to the stability of the Reform ; for even yet there lingered an opinion amongst the people at large that the Capuchins were in reality suppressed, and this opinion reacted on the spirits of the weaker brethren.

For this reason, on the feast of the Porziuncola after his election, Francesco convoked an assembly of over two hundred friars at Assisi.[57] It was a public demonstration that the Reform yet lived and would continue to live.

Amongst the Observants some there were who openly rejoiced at the pass to which the Capuchins had come ; but others—and these the Riformati who dwelt in "the houses of recollection"—were moved with a certain sympathy and in brotherly fashion hoped that the issue would mean the return of the Capuchins to swell the ranks of the internal Reform. Of these was Fra Francesco, a Venetian, custos of the Riformati in Umbria. Between him and Francesco da Jesi there was a long standing friendship born in the days when both were working together for the establishment of "houses of recollection." When the great trouble befell the Capuchins, the Venetian Francesco wrote to Francesco da Jesi, inviting him and his brethren to join forces with the Riformati, assuring him of a fraternal welcome. To the Venetian it seemed that this trouble was a sign that God willed the Reform to abide within the Observant family and leaven the whole. Francesco da Jesi replied "courteously and lovingly" that this union was impossible ; but the Venetian friar was not easily to be put off. He had visions of the great gain to the cause of the Riformati if the two reforming forces were united. So when Francesco da Jesi assembled his brethren at Assisi, the Venetian Francesco came from Spoleto where he dwelt, in the hope of winning the Capuchins over to his plans. He came armed with arguments in favour of reunion, but chiefly this : that they would obtain a bull from the Pope which would give them an ampler freedom than any bull had yet given. To this Francesco da Jesi replied : "Frate mio, you may get a bull from heaven, but that will not make a true reform! It is not the bull but the life which makes the reform. That being so," he continued, "one had but to look at the life led by this poor Capuchin congregation to see that it had all

[57] cf. Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, I, p. 16.

the marks of the perfect reform they had both long desired, and indeed," he continued—launching forth on a line of argument familiar to both—" if you would know whether the Capuchin congregation is a true reform, nay the perfect and ultimate reform, see how exactly it answers to the prophecies of holy men who since the days of St. Francis have predicted the perfect reform which would renew the Order in the spirit of St. Francis himself and of his first brethren."

Doubtless in the old days these two had often discussed those prophecies which foretold the decline and eventual regeneration of the Franciscan Order, even as through all the centuries since St. Francis' day the more zealous brethren had cherished and pondered upon them, finding in them the mainstay of their hope and the strengthening of their loyalty. This almost Messianic belief in the destiny of their Order it was which explains the peculiar vitality of the primitive Franciscan tradition during the vicissitudes through which the Order passed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. To the votaries of this tradition the secular glories of the Order counted as nothing in comparison with the unworldliness and God-lovingness of the life of Christ which it was the destiny of their Order to re-establish on earth. That is what " strictest poverty " meant to them : a sacrament of the Christ-life as they understood it.[58] They were visionaries, those men who thus kept aflame that primitive Franciscan tradition, but visionaries who harnessed their vision to hard realities—the poverty, humility and selflessness of the Divine Redeemer of men by which alone they held the kingdom of their vision could be gained. Such men dream dreams and are apt to find their utterance in apocalyptic images : and so it was with many of those brethren who are known in Franciscan history as the Spirituals.

Here then in the hospice of San Lorenzo which overlooks Assisi[59] the two friends discussed again " the prophecies."

To Francesco da Jesi there could be no doubt that the Capuchin Reform answered in every detail to the conditions of the perfect reform set forth in the prophecies. In their

[58] "Diceva il Venerabile Fra Francesco da Jesi : La vera poverta consiste in non amare cosa nissuna terrena, ma solo la Divina Maesta et di fare perfettamente la volonta sua" (Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, II, p. 1233).

[59] Francesco da Jesi and his companion were guests of the confraternity attached to the church of San Lorenzo on the hillside above the Duomo.

external life the Capuchins had conformed to the first Franciscan days ; they wore the same coarse garb as worn by St. Francis ; their houses were formed on the model of the first Franciscan places and in the matter of poverty they adhered to the strict rule as it was observed by St. Francis and his first companions. Moreover, as had been prophesied, this reform was brought about by simple and unlettered brethren as were Matteo da Bascio and Lodovico da Fossombrone and the other first fathers. And was not the prophecy fulfilled in the Capuchins, that the perfect reform would be tried by bitter persecutions and incredible troubles ?

Call it, if you will, a confession of faith rather than an argument. As such, it would seem, Francesco the Venetian took it ; for, writes the chronicler, " he departed fully satisfied ; and weeping, kissed the hands of our Father General."[60]

The incident explains much in the character of Fra Francesco da Jesi ; much too as regards the mentality in which the Capuchin congregation was reared. Not without reason have all the original Capuchin chroniclers traced the beginnings of the Reform through the long line of those " Spiritual " defenders of the primitive tradition, whose story is writ large in the religious history of the later Middle Ages.

For three years Francesco da Jesi gave himself unremittingly to the task of renewing the spirit and courage of his brethren ; and this he did not only by his words, eloquent with his own fervid faith, but even more by the example of his humble endurance and his austerity of life, and by the gentleness of his spirit imbued with the charity of Christ. And in the second year of his ministry his labours received an acknowledgment in a public act of the Pope. The ban which had been put upon the Capuchins as preachers was raised ; as a formal condition the Vicar General was required to satisfy the Pope as to the doctrine held by the congregation on the questions in dispute between the Catholics and the Lutherans. His statements concerning justification

[60] See the account of the interview in Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, p. 16. Bernardino was with the Vicar General at San Lorenzo, and had the story from Francesco da Jesi. cf. Boverius, *Annales*, *anno* 1544, XXIX.

See Appendix : *The Spiritual Tradition in the Capuchin Congregation*, Appendix, vol. ii.

by faith curiously anticipate the definitions of the Council of Trent.[61]

Once again the storm had spent itself, leaving the Capuchins purified and strengthened in spirit. Not at once did they fully recover the confidence of the people and the rulers. The glamour surrounding Ochino in which the whole congregation had shared had vanished with his apostasy. But that was not to their harm. In the comparative obscurity which followed they were given the opportunity to consolidate their freedom in the hard life they had chosen.

Two events were about to happen which were to have a marked influence on their destiny: the holding of the General Council at Trent and the appearance in Rome of a humble lay-brother whose manifest sanctity was to win back the heart of the Roman people to the congregation. Both these events mark a new era in the story of the Capuchins.

[61] Cardinal Carpi, protector of the Order, had presented a list of questions touching the doctrine of justification and the other doctrines impugned by the Lutherans. The questions and answers are given in Boverius, *Annales*, *anno* 1545.
cf. Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, II, p. 1370.

CHAPTER V

RECOVERY AND GROWTH

(i)

Not at once, as we have said, did the Capuchins regain popular favour even when the Pope had publicly declared them guiltless of the heresy some had imputed to them. Ochino's fall had hit hardly the populace, who had worshipped him, and not least that large influential section of the reforming party within the Church who had put their faith in him. With no depth of character, but sensitive to ideas and with the faculty of making these ideas emotionally his own, Ochino had been drawn into the Reform movement and had become its most popular orator. As the whole history of his life proves, he lacked moral stamina and simplicity of conviction.[1] The glamour and prestige attaching to his name had consequently been a real danger to the Capuchins, and in other circumstances might well have wrecked the Reform by undermining the sincerity and simplicity of character which was its strength. Ochino's apostasy, cruel blow that it was, probably saved the Reform from a crueller fate than actually befel it.

But gradually the unreasoning suspicion gave way and the Capuchins became more securely rooted in the people's affection and esteem than before. Freed from the ephemeral glamour of Ochino's name, their inherent value asserted itself.

Firmly but gently Francesco da Jesi had re-established discipline which had been shaken in the great upheaval. Many had left the Reform and returned to the Observant fold, and it was with depleted numbers that the congregation emerged from its trial ; yet that was no loss but rather a gain

[1] Take, for instance, his part in the affair of the Venetian Chapters (*supra*, p. 75) and his constant shiftiness after he joined the Calvinists at Geneva.

in strength. Ochino's fame had enticed not a few to become Capuchins ; there was seductiveness in the popular cry : " Happy are the Capuchins to have such a man."

Francesco da Jesi had steadied the spirit of the congregation by the pure flame of his mystic fervour. Bernardino d'Asti, who was again elected Vicar General in 1546, followed with his calm wisdom and incisive practical judgment. With both these men the Capuchin life rested for its security and spirituality upon two foundations—prayer and poverty. Francesco had declared the essential obligation of a Friar Minor to consist " in loving nothing earthly, but only the Divine Majesty and the perfect fulfilment of God's Holy Will." The same fundamental thought runs through a pastoral letter which Bernardino d'Asti addressed to the brethren in 1548. It is redolent of the primitive Franciscan spirit in its simplicity, and might well have been written by St. Francis himself.

It runs : " Reverend Fathers, and Brothers and Sons : salutations. Rejoice always in the Lord, again I say rejoice. The Lord is nigh and has a continual care of us. As precious garments adorn the body and make it to become more beautiful than it was, so are the holy virtues the precious garments and adornment of the soul ; in truth they make it more beautiful and bring it to such dignity and high station that the sinful and adulterous soul, the slave of the devil, is made the Spouse of the most high Emperor, our God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the queen and empress of the heavenly kingdom and empire. Of which virtues the most worthy and the chief is charity and love ; a virtue most sweet and desirable. Wherefore do even carnal, worldly and animal men feign to be clothed with charity ; but from such we must guard ourselves and flee, as our good Master admonishes us, saying that by their fruits, that is their works, you shall know them.

" I would, therefore, give you two examples and signs by which to know in yourselves and in others true charity. When you see a Capuchin friar continually solicitous for prayer and a real zealot of most holy poverty—when you see such a one charitable towards his spiritual brethren and other neighbours, believe that in him is true charity. But if you see one who is negligent in prayer and who takes

pleasure in a comfortable life and an abundance of sensual comforts, and who yet preaches and belauds charity, fly from him and hold him suspect ; believe not that his charity is a true charity, but more likely carnality or a love carnal and sensual ; since charity cannot abide in us without the other virtues, particularly and of necessity prayer and poverty.

" . . . . And if you see a Capuchin friar who is not observant, nay who is not zealous for the full observance of most holy poverty, hold in suspicion his prayer ; hold in suspicion his zeal for poverty. For we have known certain friars in whom there appeared a certain zeal for poverty and afterwards they repented and returned to a comfortable life, whom indeed it is not for us to judge ; but I believe the chief cause of their ruin to have been their lack of humble prayer. . . . Certain it is that as a house cannot stand which lacks foundations, so with us, if we fail fully to observe most holy poverty, God will permit our congregation to come to ruin. Woe to those Capuchin friars who seek to relax the poverty of our life ; in truth they are not Friars Minor of St. Francis but of the kin of Brother Elias, and as the Apostle says, enemies of the Cross of Christ our God ; and destroyers of our congregation. Earnestly then do I exhort and pray each one of you in so far as you can, to give yourselves diligently to humble and devout prayer ; and that you beseech from your heart the Lord to give and increase and conserve in you the holy virtues, especially most holy charity and poverty, the which with prayer are the most necessary and precious adornment of a true Friar Minor ; without which no Capuchin friar can be pleasing to God nor hope to enter into the everlasting nuptials of the divine and heavenly Bridegroom."[2]

There is a note of warning in the letter which indicates that there were some in the congregation who were faltering before the high ideal of the original Reform ; perhaps not all the waverers had already left the congregation. But that " the true Capuchin friar " pointed to in the letter was not a mere ideal figure but one commonly found in the Capuchin community, is attested by the " lives " of the

[2] *Litterae P. Bernardini Astensis*, in *Anal. Ord. Cap.*, vol. xxiv, pp. 20-21. Boverius, *Annales*, 1548, I-X, gives a free translation of the letter.

brethren which form so striking a feature in all the early chronicles of the Reform. To take a typical instance. There was Fra Matteo da Schio in the Venetian territory. He was sent with some companions to found a friary at Colle in the neighbourhood of his native town. He constructed a small friary of wattles and loam on the edge of a wood, and the belfry was the branch of a tree that grew near by. In this rude friary he and his brethren lived on rye-bread, herbs and beans ; they fasted every day and frequently flagellated themselves until the blood ran. Never did they break silence except to speak of divine things or of the Rule they had vowed. In winter when the cold was bitter they would go to the wood to gather a few sticks and warm themselves at a scant fire. They never stored food beyond the need of the day, casting aside all solicitude for temporal things in their quest for the heavenly. From this poor friary the priests would go forth to evangelise the country around. On one occasion it happened that the friary was snowbound so that the lay brother could by no means go out to quest for food ; but Fra Matteo bade the brethren be of good cheer for that God would not fail them. The dinner-hour came and since there was nothing to eat in the refectory the brethren gathered in the chapel to pray. Thus were they praying when the bell in the tree was heard to tinkle, and a brother going to the door found outside a sack of victuals ; but he who had brought it was nowhere to be seen.

Fra Matteo was afterwards Vicar of the Venetian Province ; he died in 1563.[3]

The friary of Colle was, as I have said, typical in its austerity and simplicity of many of the Capuchin friaries at this period. In the towns and in some country places the friaries were more solidly constructed of stone, yet here too the houses were small and narrow.[4] The friars' wants were few, and so they were able to observe the highest poverty.

[3] Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, II, p. 644. Boverius, *Annales*, *anno* 1563, VI. d'Arembergh : *Flores Seraphici*, I, p. 103.

[4] Some of the friaries of this period still remain and bear witness to the scrupulous care to adhere to the narrow limits set by the Constitutions. Visitors to Rome are shown the cell in which San Felice da Cantalice died in 1584; it was removed and set up in the Capuchin church in the Piazza Barberini, when the friars left San Nicola de Portiis in 1631.

Many of them kept an almost continuous fast; no superfluities of any kind were allowed; but the word "superfluities" covered much that most people would consider necessaries Until the time of Eusebio d'Ancona, who succeeded Bernardino d'Asti as Vicar General, the friars, except the sick and aged, slept upon a board with a bundle of twigs or of grasses for their pillow.[5]

Asking so little, it nevertheless seemed to them that Divine Providence had a wonderful care of them; and many are the stories told in the primitive chronicles of the marvellous interventions of God's charity whereby the brethren were succoured in times of need. There is one story worthy of the *Fioretti* which tells of the friars' simple confidence and of the responding care which their neighbours frequently had for them. It was again winter, and a great snowstorm cut off the brethren in the hermitage of Monte Casale from the town of Borgo San Sepolcro. The snow lay deep almost to the windows, and so strong was the wind that if a window were opened the snow was driven in so that everything was covered with snow. It was perilous to venture out, for Monte Casale is a nest perched on a steep mountain side with a deep ravine yawning below, and the road to the city three miles away runs high along the side of the ravine. Two strong brothers did offer to attempt the journey to beg food, since there was but a little bread in the house; but Frat' Eusebio d'Ancona, the Vicar Provincial, would not allow them, so perilous was the road. The dinner hour came and the brethren assembled in the refectory. Frat' Eusebio took the few pieces of bread and distributed them. There was but a tiny morsel for each brother, yet, says the writer who knew these brethren, they were more refreshed in spirit by this scant meal than by many a better meal. But the wonder was yet to come. That evening in the town of Borgo San Sepolcro a voice was suddenly heard calling aloud: "The poor frati at Monte Casale will die of hunger!" and there was much concern in the town concerning the fate of the friars. Early next morning fifteen of the noblest youths of the town banded together, and loading a mule with food-stuffs, set out to relieve the brethren. They battled with the wind and snow, though they afterwards

[5] Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, II, p. 1243.

declared that it "was like riding through the air, so little trouble had they." They had come to the neighbouring height of Monte Leone, when a friar, Fra Angelo, thought he heard a human voice in the distance. He ran to a window, but because of the falling snow could see nothing; yet was he sure there was a voice calling, and he took it to be the voice of some wanderer in distress. Whereupon, with the permission of the Vicar Provincial, he essayed to go forth to succour the wanderer. Twice he got as far as the fountain outside the tiny courtyard and twice was driven back by the storm. A third time he again reached the fountain to be met by the youths with their load of provisions. It was their voices he had heard![6]

The memories of such events were treasured by the brethren and drew them very near to God and man in simple gratitude.

Bernardino d'Asti, as we have seen, held that prayer and a rigid poverty were the securities for that seraphic love which St. Francis regarded as the hall-mark of a true Friar Minor. All through his administration and for long afterwards, the Capuchins jealously adhered to the original eremitical element in their vocation. Their "home-life" was dominated by the contemplative character of the hermitage. They met for common prayer at the stated hours of the Divine Office; then they scattered to their work or study in silence that they might cultivate the spirit of recollection and silent communion with God. They slept before the midnight office of matins; when that was ended they were at liberty to seek further repose; but commonly they sought their cells or went into an adjoining wood to spend the remainder of the night in prayer. Following the example of the first Franciscans, many of them would from time to time retire, with the permission of their superiors, to a solitary's cell, sometimes a rude erection in the wood near by, sometimes a mountain cave such as may be seen to-day in the wood adjoining the friary of Camerino. There they would give themselves entirely to the contemplation of heavenly things, taking but little food meanwhile and that usually but bread and water.[7] It was from such retreats

[6] Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, loc. cit: *Flores Seraphici*, I, p. 25.

[7] cf. Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, *Della vita anacorita che tennero quei primi padri* (loc. cit., II, p. 1265).

that many of their most powerful preachers went forth to evangelise the cities and villages of Italy ; and that perhaps explains the impression of an unearthly power they left on the minds of those who came under the spell of their words. One must realise actually this background of the Capuchins' public life to understand their marvellous success as preachers and workers amongst the people in that far-off sixteenth century. It was not in the schools that they learned their message to men, but in the silent hours of prayer and in the hard battle with flesh and blood which their poverty and lowliness meant. To very many of them the hard poverty they embraced—poverty of earthly ambitions as well as of material comfort—was the renouncement of actual comfort and of this world's good fortune which might have been theirs had they so desired it ; for not a few of them came of noble or gentle stock, and many of them before they joined the Capuchins were of intellectual repute.[8]

For some years until after the Council of Trent the Capuchins had no theological schools or classes ; they studied individually and privately under the guidance of some experienced teacher. Such teachers were not hard to find ; for many of those who joined the Reform had taught theology before they came ; and at first and for some years, most of the priests of the Reform had been priests before they became Capuchins. Later, when novices came direct from the world and were unversed in theology, it was decided that no novices should be received as clerics destined for the priesthood unless they had already received an education which fitted them for the study of theology.[9] Yet it still remained true that the Capuchins relied more on prayer and the study of the Scriptures as a preparation for the ministry of the Word than upon scholastic learning.

Of one thing they stood in dread—and that was the taking over of those duties of the sacred ministry which properly belong to the parish priest. Like St. Paul they held that they were called to preach the Gospel, not to baptise.

[8] Almost every second name recorded in the early chronicles of the Order indicates some family of standing in the history of the provinces or cities of Italy.

[9] Decree of the General Chapter of 1549 : Boverius, *Annales, anno* 1549 ; *Anal. Ord. Cap.*, vol. v, p. 74 : "*Nec ullus clericali militiae adscribatur nisi apposite legere noverit.*"

To intricate themselves in the work of the secular clergy would involve them in contentions and scandals such as were too common as between the regular and secular clergy at the period, and moreover would insensibly distract them from the special vocation in which they were called.[10]

Some there were amongst them, especially in Southern Italy, who would have cut themselves off altogether from the world of men, living as did the anchorites of old in the fastnesses of the hills or deserted places, wholly given to the contemplative life ; but this was never allowed to be the normal life of a Capuchin nor the fulfilment of the evangelical life which St. Francis had proposed to his Order. Even the lay brethren were not debarred from making known the Gospel of Christ to the people who after a time came to expect a sermon from any Capuchin who appeared amongst them. Like the primitive Franciscans they would speak of " the vices and virtues " of a Christian life and exhort the people whom they met to be good Christians. " And great fruit," says a chronicler, " came from these simple discourses." There was Frat' Egidio da Orvieto "a lay brother of great courage," who one day arrived at a castello in the Roman Compagna. At once the people crowded around him and demanded a sermon ; but Frat' Egidio, shy of the crowd, thought by subterfuge to escape the unexpected honour. " I must have paper and pen to make notes," he told them ; " there are many things to think of." The people replied that in all the castello they did not believe either pen or writing paper could be found ; but a sermon they would have. " Well then," said the frate, " ring the bell and I will preach you a sermon." And he preached so earnestly that when the sermon was finished the people would not let him go, but kept him by force for fifteen days, demanding a sermon every day. It happened that during this time an Augustinian friar arrived at the castello, and Frat' Egidio sought him out and begged him to take the sermon ; which the Augustinian did willingly. The people listened to the new preacher impatiently for awhile and then bade him be silent ; they would have a sermon from Frat' Egidio.[11] But

[10] Bernardino da Colpetrazzo : *Della vita anacorita,* loc. cit.

[11] Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, loc. cit., *Della predicatione di quei primi padri,* II, p. 1268.

many a lay brother on the daily quest was spiritual counsellor and instructor to those at whose houses he called. We shall meet one such later on who was not undeservedly called " the apostle of Rome." But, says the old chronicler, when the *predicatori litterati*—the educated preachers—came to preach, so great a name they gained throughout Italy that many of them could preach only in the cities appointed them by the Apostolic See, so many cities demanded their preaching ; and so, much good was done among the people both by the simple and the learned.[12]

It was not only in the matter of evangelising the people that the lay brothers at this period were associated with the external activities of the priests ; they were also to be found filling the more responsible offices in the congregation as guardians of communities, novice-masters and even provincial superiors ; the chief qualification for these offices being spiritual wisdom and religious virtue.[13]

Thus upon a foundation of earnest simple piety the Capuchin congregation was consolidated by a happy succession of Vicars General—Bernardino d'Asti, Francesco da Jesi and Eusebio d'Ancona—all remarkable for their manifest holiness of life and in whom the spirit of the first Franciscan days again shone with a clear light. With Eusebio d'Ancona we shall become more fully acquainted before this chapter in our story ends. But first it will be well to know something more of the men who carried the pure spirit of the Reform into the outer world, preaching the gospel of Christ as they learned it in the school of Franciscan poverty.

(ii)

They were all preachers, these Capuchins, preaching by deeds as well as by words ; for so they interpreted that

[12] Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, looking back over half a century of intimate acquaintance with the first Capuchins, was not always exact as to numbers. His *maggior parti di loro* (predicatori litterati), who were thus directly under the orders of the Pope, is not to be taken literally. Amongst the friars who are known to have been specially commissioned by the Pope for particular cities were Bernardino Ochino and Giacomo da Molfetta. But there were probably others.

[13] See the " lives " of a number of these lay-brother superiors in *Flores Seraphici*, I, p. 341, *seq.*

service of man which is one with the service of God in the gospel of the Franciscan life. With them " the true poverty " —abandonment of earthly desires and possessions that they might be free to love the Divine Majesty and fulfil His holy will—was a faith not for themselves alone but for the salvation of the whole world of men ; and to propagate that faith was a duty of love they owed to the world in which they lived. It was with this definite purpose, then, that they went forth from their hermitages and friaries. Not that they preached the abandonment of the ordinary duties of life to those who were not called to the special service to which they themselves were called ; their Catholic Faith prevented any such narrowing of the kingdom of God. But the message they bore was that of the sovereignty of the Divine Majesty and their labour was to induce men to rule and fashion their lives in obedience to the Divine Law as revealed in the Gospel of Christ. But because they were men who had learned their message in their own hard struggle against the ungodly inducements and habits of the time they lived in, their words when they spoke went true to their mark and men listened to them because they hit the truth as their hearers knew it in the hidden depths of their hearts. In the inexorable truth in which they faced their own lives, they faced their fellow men ; and in the knowledge of themselves learned in their own spiritual struggles, their words rang with the compassion and humanity of the fellow sufferer. So they preached from the one text on which their own lives were formed—the Gospel of Christ, and preached as only men can to whom that Gospel is the one way of life. " So it came about," says the reminiscent chronicler, "that the preaching of the Holy Scripture was renewed in the Church, where until now had been preached but the questions (of the Schools), philosophy, Æsop's fables and other dreams and vanities ; and when the Capuchins began to preach the Gospel, so pleased were all the people that when they found the Gospel was not being preached, they would not listen to the preacher ; and so other preachers were forced to lay aside their fables and preach the Gospel of Christ if they wished to be heard."[14]

[14] Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, II, p. 1268. This reform in preaching was not exclusively due to the Capuchins : it was a trait of all the new Orders

Amongst the more notable preachers at this time was Fra Giacomo da Molfetta. He was already reputed a powerful preacher when he passed over from the Observants to the Capuchins in 1536. To a natural gift of eloquence he added a well cultured mind; he was well versed in classical and Italian literature, had a scholar's knowledge of Hebrew and Chaldaic and was an expert in theology;[15] a good example, therefore, of the *predicatori litterati*. As an expert theologian Giacomo was drawn by the Viceroy into the controversy concerning the new religious teaching of Juan Valdez which about 1536 was creating a stir in Naples; and, in consequence of the reputation he then gained, he was sent by Bernardino Ochino, then Vicar General of the Capuchins, to preach in the cities of Northern Italy where the Lutheran and Calvinist doctrines were making rapid headway. At Forli he preached with considerable power and persuasiveness and brought many heretics back to the Church; but his preaching was sharply criticised by some of the preachers of the city to whom his arguments seemed novel and strange and "tasting of sympathy with the new teaching." The same criticism of him was made at Bologna, where he had to submit to a stringent examination at the hands of a Dominican, when it was found that his arguments were based on an extensive knowledge of the works of St. Augustine: but they were not the arguments commonly taught in the Schools![16] From Forli he was sent to preach against the heretics in Ferrara, where under the protection of the Duchess Renée many Huguenots expelled from France had found a refuge. But at Ferrara he met with a chill reception from the Vicar Capitular, Ugo Boncompagni, himself a humanist of no mean parts, but no favourer of the new religious teaching. Rumours had reached him from

founded in the early part of the sixteenth century. What the chronicler says of the style of preaching hitherto in vogue is borne out by contemporary witnesses: for instance, Cardinal Bembo's statement to Vittoria Colonna, already quoted.

[15] Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, II, p. 742. Giacomo da Molfetta had been elected Provincial of the Observants of Apulia at the early age of thirty-three. Two years later he was deposed by the Commissary General, Ilarione Sacchetti, presumably for his reforming tendencies. It is said that at the Provincial Chapter he had prevailed upon the Capitular fathers to abolish certain customs which were contrary to the Rule of poverty. cf. P. Salvatore da Valenzano, *I Cappuccini nelle Puglie* (1926), p. 43.

[16] Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, II, p. 740, *seq.*

Forli of Fra Giacomo's unconventional arguments and the suspicion attaching to them. At first he refused to allow Fra Giacomo either to preach or to enter the city, and Giacomo and his companion Fra Raffaele had perforce to take refuge in a poor church outside the walls. On the way to Ferrara, Giacomo had said to Raffaele ; " We will see if God is still to be found in Ferrara." Eventually Ugo Boncompagni consented to allow Fra Giacomo to preach a sermon in the cathedral on condition that he took as his subject the doctrine of predestination. It would be a test sermon, to be preached in the presence of Ugo himself and the civic and ecclesiastical dignitaries. Giacomo preached, and that was the beginning of Ugo Boncompagni's high regard for the Capuchins ; it was he who thirty-five years later as Pope Gregory XIII was to allow the Capuchins to found houses beyond the Alps. For the present he invited Giacomo to remain in the city and preach against " the new teaching," and a little later Giacomo felt he could say : " Indeed God is in Ferrara."[17] In 1540 he preached the Lenten course in Ragusa on the Dalmatian coast and made so great an impression that the magistrates of the city obtained from Pope Paul III a brief commanding Fra Giacomo to return to Ragusa and preach there the following Advent and Lent.[18] Giacomo went and so held the heart of the people that they wished to keep him with them as their Archbishop : but Giacomo would not hear of it ; his only ambition, as he replied about this time to the commissary of the Observant General, was to observe the Rule of St. Francis. On another occasion when Giacomo visited Ragusa, the citizens detained him by force for six months, that they might benefit by his sermons. With a fearless courage Giacomo denounced the vices of the time ; but his most powerful denunciation was for those who oppressed and bled the poor. He had no pity for the usurers and profiteers who fattened on the sufferings and needs of the people already starved by the ravages of war. During his preaching tour in Northern Italy in 1539 or thereabouts, he brought about the institution of the *Bottega di Cristo*— " Christ's Shop "—where food was sold to the poor at a

[17] Mattia da Salo : *Historia Cappuccina*, II, p. 106.
[18] *Bullar. Ord. Cap.*, III, p. 107.

price they could afford.[19] Many were the stories told of Giacomo's fearless dealings with the usurers in his own native province of Apulia. One offender accused him to the governor of Lecce of having said in a sermon that three pitchforks were needed, one for the bishop, one for the accuser and one for the governor himself. Giacomo was cited to the governor's court. He easily proved that the accusation was a lie : then seizing the accuser's cloak and making as though he would wring it, he called out : " See how the blood of the poor runs." In sudden terror his enemies fled.[20] In the end his fearless courage brought about his death in a virtual imprisonment. In 1560—he was then an old man of seventy-one years—he again raised his voice against the tyranny of the Spanish governor in Apulia. For this crime Fra Giacomo was condemned to a rigorous confinement in the friary of Mesagne : and there he died the following year, loved by the people and revered as a saint. After his death a statue was raised to him and to this day his memory is kept green amongst the people he loved. He was a type of Capuchin well known in the chronicles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[21]

Another outstanding figure among the *predicatori litterati* was Fra Giuseppe da Ferno[22] : A lovable man he must have been because all men loved him, and a man of extraordinarily sane judgment since leaders of men came to him for counsel. Like all the Capuchin preachers who have left their mark on the religious history of their time, Giuseppe was a man of wide sympathies and of no mean self-interests, with his eye upon the practical needs of the people, and a ready hand for whosoever was doing good work for God and the souls of men. The newly-founded congregations of Clerks-Regular—the Barnabites and the Somaschi—who were labouring heroically by the side of the Capuchins for the saving of the faith of the people in Northern Italy—looked to him as a sort of godfather, so keenly interested was he in their work, so intimate was he in their councils. One's last glimpse of

[19] Mattia da Salo, op. cit., p. 106.

[20] Archiv. di Stato, Milano, vista 19, t. II, p. 20, quoted in *I Cappuccini nelle Puglie*, p. 46.

[21] cf. P. Salvatore da Valenzano : *I Cappuccini nelle Puglie*, pp. 38-62.

[22] See Bernardino da Colpetrazzo II, p. 709, *seq* ; Boverius *Annales*, *anno* 1556, I.

him, when his own labours were over, is of the old friar as he rises from his sick bed and leaning on the arm of the young Fra Mattia da Salo goes forth to visit a community of the Barnabites, to give them his last words of encouragement.[23] His coming was always like a burst of sunshine or the waft of a refreshing breeze ; such was the bright cheerfulness which cloaked his indomitable earnestness. One incident reveals the man. Arriving one day at a friary, he found the guardian lving sick. Giuseppe entered the sick room and glanced wistfully at the sick friar ; cheerily he exclaimed : " Padre mio, why are you lying here instead of preparing a meal for a hungry man ?" Then, bending over the sick friar, he signed his forehead with the sign of the cross. " Now," said he, " we will go together and see what meal they will give us." The guardian arose and went with Giuseppe, his sickness gone.[24]

One of Giuseppe's preoccupations was the instruction of the young in their religious faith. The root of the religious indifference of the time and of the spread of heresy was to his mind the lack of religious instruction. The people did not know the faith they professed ; to them the God they were asked to worship was an unknown God. That was why he was especially interested in the Somaschi, part of whose work was to instruct the poor. For the same reason he took an active interest in promoting the *Scuola della Dottrina Christiana*, founded in 1536 by a priest of Castellino da Castello for the instruction of youth. Inspired by this work, he himself the following year founded at Pavia a similar society, the *Compagnia dei Servi dei Puttini*—the Society of the Servants of Poor Boys—for teaching the children of the poor.[25] When later in 1548 he was anxious to give a surer permanence to this work he induced the magistrates of Pavia to apply to Saint Ignatius Loyola for two Jesuits to take over the instruction. Ignatius was unable to accede to this petition because of the fewness of his priests ; whereupon Giuseppe interviewed the Archbishop, Cardinal del Monte, urging him to provide instruction, " especially for the orphans and

[23] Mattia da Salo, *Historia Cappuccina*, II, p. 193.

[24] Mario da Mercato-Seraceno relates the story in his *Narratione*. Mario was himself the sick guardian.

[25] cf. *Anal. Ord. Cap.*, vol. xxxix, p. 48.

converts "[26] Eventually, but not till after Giuseppe's death, his friends the Barnabites took over the work of the Society.

But the work by which Giuseppe is best remembered is his propagation of the devotion of the *Quarant'ore* or forty hours' adoration before the Blessed Sacrament—an exercise of devotion which was to play a great part in the apostolate of the Capuchins throughout the next century.

Some have claimed that Giuseppe da Ferno was the originator of this devotion. It is more true to say that he and his friend San Antonio Zaccaria, founder of the Barnabites, were its chief propagators ; but that to Giuseppe the devotion owes the solemn form in which later it became an institution of the Catholic Church.[27]

The origin of this *Quarant'ore* can be traced to the devotion of a priest in Milan who gathered the people together in successive parties to pray before the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle for forty continuous hours, in memory of the forty hours during which the body of Christ lay in the tomb. It was practically a revival of the old medieval devotion to Christ in the sepulchre, which was a feature of the Holy Week services in some of the Cathedrals.

In 1537 Giuseppe da Ferno was preaching the Lent in the Duomo of Milan. It was a year of suffering, for Lombardy was devastated by the long-drawn-out wars between the Emperor Charles V and the King of France : and the heart of Giuseppe went out to the suffering citizens living in terror of fresh horrors. Then came to him the inspiration of a solemn act of reparation and intercession in which the whole city would unite as with one voice. Giuseppe would lead them to the feet of the Crucified Redeemer : and from the devotion of " the forty hours at the sepulchre " he conceived the plan of this great civic act of worship. The Blessed Sacrament would be borne solemnly in procession through the city and placed on the altars in various churches, and the citizens marshalled in companies would turn by turn

[26] cf. S. Ignatius de Loyola et P. Josephus a Ferno in *Anal. Ord. Cap.*, vol. xx, p. 249, *seq.*

[27] cf. *De Origine Orationis XL Horarum* a P. Eduardo Alinconiensi (Roma, 1897) : *Contribuzione alla storia Eucharistica di Milano* del Sac. Obl. Achille Ratti (now Pope Pius XI) (Milano, 1895). See also the scholarly discussion of the subject by P. Valdamiro Bonari in *I Cappuccini della Provincia Milanese*, parte 2, vol. i, p. 53, *seq.*

take the watches of the adoration, led by the preacher who at each hour would give a short address on some mystery of our Lord's Passion, to excite sorrow for sin and love of the Redeemer. At the end of the forty hours' prayer the citizens would register their vow of a greater fidelity to their Lord who had died for them, and once again the Blessed Sacrament would be borne in solemn procession to receive the homage of a contrite people. Such was the devotion of the *Quarant' ore* as Giuseppe da Ferno inaugurated it that year in Milan. The effect was a marvellous renewal of spirit amongst the war-stricken Milanese such as had not been witnessed in the city for many years. The devotion spread rapidly throughout northern and central Italy ; it became a feature in the missions of the Capuchins ; a solemn act of civic piety acknowledging the Divine Redeemer as the people's Lord ; an act to be prepared for with a due confession of sin and a promise of amendment of life. Thus at Borgo San Sepolcro, where Giuseppe preached in June 1538, for fifteen days before the *Quarant'ore*, the church bells rang by order of the City Council at stated hours, calling the people to recite five *paters* in honour of the five wounds of Christ Crucified that enmities might be healed, for the city was rent by rival factions ; and for fifteen days agents chosen by the council were to work for peace and the healing of discords.[28] At Modena, where he preached the *Quarant'ore* in 1539, the devotion crowned a resolve on the part of the citizens to provide for the hungry poor ; for Modena had become a city of beggars.

Thus with his love of Christ and of men, Giuseppe evangelised Lombardy, Tuscany and the Romagna, even Corsica. He died in 1556. On his deathbed he comforted and gladdened the brethren who gathered around him, as he had gladdened them all through his laborious life.

There were many other preachers at this time, worthy of special mention, whose practical services on behalf of the poor and the oppressed gave weight to their words and won

[28] See the interesting account of this *Quarant'ore* in the Archivio Communale di S. Sepolero, serie XXXII, No nuovo 157 vecchio A. 172, quoted in *Anal. Ord. Cap.* I have not seen Fra Giuseppe's treatise on the *Quarant'ore* entitled in *Bibliotheca Scriptorum O.M. Cap.* (edit. 1747), p. 154 : *Methodus sive Instructio celebrandi devote et cum fructu Orationem XL Horarum.* It was published at Milan in 1571.

them the love of the people. It was Fra Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, the chronicler (though he did not consider himself one of the *litterati*) who induced the magistrates of his native town and of the neighbouring town of Torre, in the valley of Todi, to establish *Monti Frumentari*, or communal grain-shops, that the peasant farmers of the district might obtain grain at reasonable prices and so avert the ruin which threatened them.[29] Frat' Arcangelo of Palermo, of the noble family of the Caprona in that city, in his long missionary career as a preacher in Sicily, not only fostered the *Monti di Pietà*—for lending money to the poor without interest—but established Prisoners' Aid Societies and was instrumental in founding convalescent homes for the sick poor.[30] Such active works of mercy were indicative of the broad charity and human sympathies of the Capuchin preachers. But it was the simple earnestness of their preaching, devoid of the arts of eloquence, yet eloquent with the vivid intuitions of the spirit, which compelled their hearers to listen, and brought the obdurate to contrition and amendment of life. Very insistent were the early leaders of the Capuchins that their preachers should adhere rigorously to the rule of evangelical simplicity. At the General Chapter of 1555 Eusebio d'Ancona vigorously denounced a tendency which was showing itself in some of the younger preachers to cultivate the arts of rhetoric; not in studying books of rhetoric, but by prayer and the study of the Scriptures must the Capuchin preacher prepare himself for his apostolate; and not in flowers of oratory but in simple truth and fervour of spirit must he announce the word of God.[31]

(iii)

Meanwhile, the Capuchin congregation was again rapidly increasing in numbers; and in the wake of their more notable preachers friaries were multiplying. It is evident, as indeed one would expect, that as numbers increased the purity of the original observance demanded a watchful care on the part of the superiors. At the General Chapter of 1549, when

[29] cf. P. Francesco da Vicenza: *Il P. Bernardino da Colpetrazzo e i Monti Frumentari* in *l' Italia Francescana* (Roma, 1927), p. 131, *seq.*

[30] *Flores Seraphici*, I, p. 177.

[31] Boverius, *Annales*, *anno* 1555, II.

Bernardino d'Asti was elected Vicar General for the third time, it was enacted that no friar should be elected guardian of a friary unless he had been five years in the Reform, and that none should be admitted as clerics who had not received an adequate education. In the General Chapter of 1552 it was decreed that no recourse should be had to money except for the necessaries of life and then only when such necessaries could not be procured by begging from door to door ; nor were any saleable goods to be received for the purpose of procuring flesh-meat or other foods ; no friars except the sick and infirm were to be allowed the use of pillows of straw, still less of wool ; the cloaks worn by the brethren were not to extend lower than the fingers ; guardians were to correct those officials of the community who were negligent in their duty, but otherwise they were not to interfere unnecessarily with the officials in the discharge of their duties ; and the brethren were forbidden to act as physicians to seculars. As we have seen, at the General Chapter of 1555, Eusebio d'Ancona, newly re-elected Vicar General, vehemently rebuked certain of the younger preachers. The life was undoubtedly a hard life, almost inhumanly hard as some had said, and only tolerable to such as had a joyous and simple faith. After the death of Paul III, the fervour of the Reform was somewhat endangered by a new influx of Observants. The often promised internal reform of the Observant communities in Italy was still delayed, and many held in consequence that the edicts of Paul III prohibiting the migration of Observants to the Capuchin congregation no longer had force of law. But many who passed over to the Capuchins did so from a spirit of restlessness induced by the disturbed conditions in the Observant family; these, after awhile, finding the life of the Capuchins too austere, returned to their original communities after having caused disturbance amongst the Capuchins. In consequence of this, Julius III in 1551 issued a brief renewing the edicts of Paul III.[32] The result of these prohibitory edicts was not

[32] Brief, *In eminenti* of February 15, 1551, in *Bullar. Ord. Cap.* I, p. 24 ; Boverius, *Annales, anno* 1551, I.

According to Boverius Bernardino d'Asti had applied to the Pope to forbid the return of Observants who had once passed over to the Capuchins, and the brief, he says, was issued in consequence. The explanation is highly improbable. The brief of Julius III is almost word for word a repetition of the prohibitive

altogether what the Observant superiors desired. It is true they put a stop to migrations which would have emptied the Observant family in Italy of its more vigorous element. But at the same time these edicts largely contributed towards making the Capuchin Reform permanently separate from the Observant jurisdiction. Had the Reform continued to be mainly recruited from the Observants, the ultimate reunion of the two families might possibly have been brought about on the basis of a twofold observance under the direct jurisdiction of the Minister General : the system which did eventually save the Observant family from further disintegration. But the influx of Observants was checked, with the result that a new generation of Capuchins grew up who had never been Observants and who knew the Observants merely as adversaries of the Reform. It was largely the family feeling of Bernardino d'Asti and his generation for the Observants, which made the earlier Capuchins protest so vigorously against the prohibitory edicts of Paul III : with them the Capuchin Reform was distinctly a reform of the Observants. To preserve the life of the Reform, they had claimed exemption from the jurisdiction of the Observant superiors, yet they regarded themselves as carrying on the original purpose of the Observant reform itself; and hence they claimed as a right that all Observants should be free to join the Capuchins in the stricter observance of the Rule. The new generation of Capuchins, mainly recruited from outside the Observant family, no longer regarded themselves as Observants but as an entirely distinct branch of the Franciscan Order ; and in time came to regard the influx of Observants as a danger to the spirit of their congregation. Thus when in 1567 the Discalced Observants of Spain petitioned to be united with the Capuchins, their petition was not received with any great eagerness. They were told that such a union could not be brought about but with the consent of the Pope and the King of Spain ; but the Capuchins do not seem to have made any effort to forward the petition, though at the time they were in favour with the reigning Pontiff, Pius V.[33] Thus gradually the Capuchins

briefs of Paul III against which Bernardino d'Asti had formerly protested as an infringement of the liberty allowed by Canon Law.

[33] Boverius, *Annales*, *anno* 1567 ; cf. *Anal. Ord. Cap.*, vol. v, p. 80.

came to disregard their filiation from the primitive Franciscan fraternity as derived through the Observants, and to consider only their spiritual filiation in virtue of the Rule they aspired to observe. So as the years went by the Capuchins attained to an ever-clearer corporate self-consciousness, and the two congregations became as two distinct families though confessing to the same spiritual parentage.

But in the time of Paul IV danger came to the stability of the Capuchins from another source ; and this time it was a threatened effective union with the Conventuals. The internal condition of the Conventual Franciscans at this period was much the same as amongst the Observants ; the general body had become lax and demoralised even within the concessions granted them by the popes ; though again, as amongst the Observants, there had been a recurring movement in favour of reform. Long before he became Pope, Paul IV had urged the reform or the suppression of the Conventual communities in Italy,[34] and it was probably as a means of reforming them that he now contemplated an effective union of the Conventuals with the Capuchins.[35] The proposition filled the Capuchins with consternation ; the result would indeed have been fatal to the spirit of the Reform. For three years Eusebio d'Ancona dared not leave Rome lest some such arrangement be made during his absence. The question was complicated by the fact that two new congregations, one in Sicily founded by Girolamo Lanza during the pontificate of Julius III, [36] and a congregation of Reformed Conventuals in Spain, later known as Alcantarines, had assumed the habit and the name of the Capuchins, though remaining separate in jurisdiction.[37]

[34] See his memorial sent to Clement VII in 1532 in Ranke : *History of the Popes*, vol. iii, Appendix 29.

[35] Mario da Mercato-Seraceno, *Narratione*, cart. 255.

[36] The Sicilian congregation arose at first as an independent society of hermits. They were allowed by Julius III to adopt the Capuchin habit and to profess the Rule of St. Francis "after the manner of the Capuchins." They were suppressed by Pius IV in 1662. Some of them then united with the Conventuals and founded houses of Reformed Conventuals. cf. Holzapfel : *Manuale Historiae Ord. F.F. Min.* (Freiburg, 1909), pp. 531-532.

[37] The Reformed Conventuals, or Alcantarines, of Spain are styled : *Fratres Minores de Observantia Capuccini nuncupati* in the bull of Pius IV aggregating them to the Observants in 1565. (*Bullar Ord. F. Min. Discalceatorum*, I, p. 159). They had originally been Observants before they passed to the Conventuals for greater freedom in observing their reform. Julius III in 1552 gave them permission to wear the Capuchin habit.

The question of union with the Conventuals remained unsettled during the pontificate of Paul IV, but on the election of Pius IV in 1559, Tommaso da Citta di Castello, who had succeeded Eusebio d'Ancona the previous year, again protested against the proposed union, and to secure the independence of the Capuchin Reform, obtained a new Papal bull by which the Reform was confirmed in the rights and privileges granted it by Clement VII and Paul III ; by the same bull the Sicilian congregation of Girolamo Lanza and all others were forbidden to call themselves Capuchins or to wear the Capuchin habit.[38]

By this bull the independence of the Capuchins was finally secured, and when in 1562 the Council of Trent resumed its sittings, the Vicar General of the Reform was for the first

[38] See the bull, *Pastoralis officii cura*, of April 2, 1560, in *Bullar. Ord. Cap.*, I, pp. 25-28.

Boverius, *Annales*, *anno* 1555, III, states that fresh troubles arose after the death of Julius III and during the pontificate of Paul IV, and attributes the trouble to the rivalry of the Observants. Again, in recounting the events of 1558, he says that the Observants made another attempt to suppress the Capuchins, and won over " a certain cardinal " to their cause who actually prepared a bull of suppression to present to the Pope ; but that for some reason the cardinal " took flight," and left Rome before the scheme could be carried out. This detail of the cardinal's sudden flight is just the sort of dramatic flourish that Boverius delighted in. In view of the statement of Mario da Mercato-Seraceno, that Paul IV wished to unite the Conventuals and the Capuchins, I would be inclined to discredit the whole story of this intrigue of the Observants as told by Boverius, but for the fact that there is frequently an element of truth in this annalist's distorted statements. Possibly Clemente di Moneglia, the Observant General, in his design to reform the Italian Observants, made another effort to re-unite the Capuchins with the Observants. Clemente was created cardinal in 1557 ; is he the cardinal Boverius refers to ? We must await further, yet undiscovered, documentary evidence before we can give a definite judgment. Boverius, however, makes no allusion to the proposed union with the Conventuals. It should be noticed as throwing light on this situation, that Pius IV, after confirming the status of the Capuchins, disbanded the " Capuchins " of Girolamo Lanza in 1562. In 1565 he aggregated the Spanish Reformed Conventuals, also known as " Capuchins " to the Observants ; and the same year gave the Conventuals new constitutions. (cf. *Bullar. Taurinense*, VII, p. 401, *seq.*)

The question of the union of the Conventuals with the Capuchins was again brought up in 1568 as an alternative to the proposed union of the Conventuals with the Observants. The General of the Conventuals, Tancredo da Colle, was in favour of union with either Observants or Capuchins ; but the opposite party amongst the Conventuals supported by the learned canonist, de Navarra, prevailed upon Pius V to allow the Conventuals to remain a distinct congregation. The Capuchins themselves were opposed to the union.

cf. Mario da Mercato-Seraceno, loc. cit., cart. 255-256. Wadding-Luca, *Annales*, *anno* 1568.

time invited to the Council and given a place amongst the Generals of the Mendicant Orders.[39]

When, in the following year, the reform of the Religious Orders was under discussion, and it was decided to grant to all mendicant Orders, including the Conventual Friars Minor, the right to hold property in common, the Council exempted from the decree the two Orders of "the Capuchins and the Friars Minor styled of the Observance." In the earlier days of Paul III the Observants had appealed to the future General Council to decide the fate of the Capuchins. The Council had now decided by recognising the Reform as one of those orders "which by their zeal for reform deserved to be treated with favour."[40] So after nearly forty years of troubled life the Capuchins at last came into their own. It was a triumph for more than their own freedom; it was a triumph of that return to sincerity and truth which was the goal of the Catholic Reformation.[41]

[39] Bernardino d'Asti had been present at the Council in 1546, but only in the capacity of a minor-theologian, not as representing the Vicar General of the congregation, cf. Theiner: *Acta Conc. Trid.* I, p. 181.

[40] See the speech of Tommaso Stella, O.P., Bishop of Capo d'Istria (Justinopolis) in the General Congregation of November 25, 1563. *Ibid.* II, p. 496.

[41] Boverius, *Annales*, *anno* 1545, XXX, has a story that when Bernardino d'Asti was at the Council of Trent a discussion took place in the Council concerning the headship of the whole Franciscan Order; and that the Conciliar Fathers had decided to grant the headship of the Order together with the ancient seal to the Capuchin Reform; but Bernardino d'Asti refused the honour, declaring that the Capuchins desired only their freedom to observe the Rule. The story is founded on a statement by Bernardino da Colpetrazzo in his Chronicle, I, p. 577, who says that the Council recognised the Capuchins as true sons of St. Francis, "*et questo fii che non poco fermo la povra congregatione de li Capuccini che insino a questo tempo fii sempre in grand, timore.*" He then adds simply that the Council wished to give the seal of the Order to the Capuchins, but they refused it, "*nella loro humilita et non dare travaglio al corpo della religione*," "in their humility and because they did not wish to cause trouble to the body of the Order." He does not mention Bernardino d'Asti in connection with this incident, and it is evident from the context that he refers to the final sessions of the Council, when Bernardino d'Asti had been dead nine years.

There is, however, no record in the Acts of the Council of any such proposed grant of the seal. If the proposition was made at all, it must have been made at one of the informal meetings. The story as told by Boverius is another instance of that annalist's irresponsible manipulation of the records he had at hand.

He also tells a dramatic story of an interview which took place during the Council between the agents of the General of the Observants, Francesco Zamora, and Tommaso da Città di Castello, Vicar General of the Capuchins. Zamora, he says, sent certain Riformati to negotiate with the Vicar General a reunion of the Capuchins and Observants. The interview is not improbable. But Boverius could not avoid a dramatic sequel. When Zamora, adds Boverius, heard of the failure of the interview, he was so disappointed that he immediately left for Spain! (*Annales, anno* 1562, II.)

PART II

THE CAPUCHINS SPREAD ABROAD

CHAPTER VI

FRA FELICE

(i)

FRA FELICE DA CANTALICE[1] died in the Capuchin friary of San Buonaventura[2] by the Quirinal Hill, on May 18, 1587 ; and was at once canonised by the voice of the Roman people. Had they not for many years known that he was a saint? It was of course right that a Requiem Mass should be said for his soul, and a *Libera* chanted on the day of his burial ; that was the proper form when a Christian died. But nobody believed that Fra Felice had need to be prayed for ; and as for burying his body in the common cemetery of the friars, that was not to be thought of. Fra Felice belonged to the whole city, not only to the friars, and the citizens would not be satisfied till his body rested in a marble tomb where anyone who wished might be free to come and pay him the homage of affection and invoke his intercession. So Fra Felice, the lay-brother of the Capuchins, was laid to rest in a marble tomb which happily was at hand, to the mingled sorrow and joy of the people of Rome ; it was well known that the Pope intended without delay to proceed with his canonisation.[3]

Forty-four years before this, Fra Felice had joined the Capuchins in the troublous time which followed the apostasy of Bernardino Ochino. He had been a farm labourer in his native Abruzzi, and had been drawn to the Capuchins through listening to the story of the Fathers of the Desert

[1] cf. Acta S. S. Maii, IV, die 18, p. 203, *seq.* ; Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, II, 1141, *seq.* ; Boverius, *Annales*, *anno* 1583.

[2] The Capuchins had removed from Sant' Eufemia in 1536. The church of San Buonaventura had hitherto been known as San Nicola di Porzi. To-day it is known as Santa Croce dei Lucchesi. cf. P. Edouard d'Alençon : *San Nicola de Portiis* (Roma, 1908).

[3] Sixtus V died in 1590, before he could carry out his intention, and it was not until 1625 that Felice was beatified. He was canonised in 1724.

read to him by some friend of the family in which he was employed. There was a Capuchin hermitage near Cantalice and thither at last he found his way and diffidently stated his wish to become a friar if they thought him worthy. The guardian led him to the altar in the small church and there pointing to the crucifix, spoke of the hard life of Jesus Christ on earth, and asked Felice if he were ready to follow in the footsteps of Him Who had suffered so much for us. Felice replied that, God helping him, he would try ; and so he had been accepted and sent to Rome. At first the hard life led by the friars had seemed too much for his strength ; he was struck down with fever and for weeks lay helpless on the straw mattress which was his bed. The friars were debating about sending him home as one too delicate in health for their austerity, when Felice by sheer effort of will rose from his bed and declared that as the others fared so would he, and at once began to fast and work and pray with the best of them ; nor did he fall sick again until his last sickness, forty-four years later. He took his vows at the end of the year ; and from that time till almost the day of his death he was the questor of the Roman community, daily making a round of the streets to supply the brethren with their daily bread. Thus began the strange informal apostolate of this rugged simple lay-brother.

Strictly, his duty was to beg their daily bread for the brethren, and that he did with a will. Winter and summer he went his round, always barefooted, even without the sandals allowed to the weaker brethren, nor did he even on the coldest days allow himself the comfort of the cloak which the Rule permitted. Did anyone chide him for these austerities, Felice replied that sandals and cloak were needful for others, but not for one so robust as himself ; for him they were a needless luxury and a hindrance to his work. Moreover, he would say, he was one of those whom it is ill to pamper ; he was really but an idle, ease-loving ass, if people only knew him. To make him take his rest like others when his daily round was done—that would be his undoing. Felice throve in his hard toil and pitiless self-crucifixion. Until the end he never missed his daily round except on Sundays and feast-days, and then he would be busy with services of charity within or without the friary. Yet in this daily round

of service he found the life of prayer and spiritual recollection which had drawn him to the Fathers of the Desert. The streets of Rome became his hermitage ; there he learned to live in constant communion with the unseen world ; the distractions and gossip of the city left him untouched. When after his death the lay-brethren, who at different times had been his companions on the quest, were asked to tell what they knew of his manner of life, they one and all bore witness chiefly to this, that he never spoke an idle or unseemly word. Thus Fra Domenico averred that Fra Felice " was sparing of his words, but what he said was good." Fra Francesco swore that " he never heard Fra Felice speak other than of good things." Fra Ruffino, that " never an idle word fell from his lips : his conversation was that of an angel rather than of a man, because his words were always well considered." Fra Marco was slightly critical : " Fra Felice," he said, " had a rustic simplicity and was without ceremony ; but his words were sweet and gentle, and everybody loved him."[4] A wonderful testimony when you consider that for thirty-nine years Felice was doing a daily round of Rome and was the willing friend of all who had need of his services. In trouble or sickness all Rome came to think itself at liberty to call for him : cardinals and working-folk, the aged and the children—it was Fra Felice to whom they looked for kindly comfort or shrewd advice, and at length even for miracles. Perhaps it was in part his gay humour and indomitable cheerfulness and rugged good sense which wrought the miracles, and his way of never taking " nay " for " aye " when he meant to do others a service in spite of themselves. " O lazybones !" he cried out on entering the bed chamber of a man given up for dead by the doctors ; " O lazybones ! up and get out into the fresh air. It is exercise and fresh air you need, whatever the doctors say." The man got up—and lived.

Youth and children loved him, and he loved them. They would gather around him in the street and listen whilst he talked to them of Christ and His Blessed Mother. But it was by song that he mostly instructed them. He improvised verses which he taught them to sing ; and Fra Felice's songs became in some sort a fashion of the day. But Felice was a

[4] cf. *Informatio de vita, morte et miraculis*, in Acta SS., loc. cit., p. 206, *seq.*

merry teacher and would take the fun and chaff of the students of the Jesuit college, whom he taught to sing his hymns, with a gaiety equal to their own.

Another there was in Rome, gay with the gaiety of holiness, and that was Padre Filippo, the founder of the Roman Oratory—known in the English tongue as Saint Philip Neri. He and Felice were kindred spirits. Meeting in the streets they would make merry and play the fool, whilst each felt he loved God the more for the presence of his friend. Rome laughed with both of them whilst to each she gave her profound reverence because of the wisdom she learned from each. For Fra Felice, like Padre Filippo, was spiritual adviser to many in their perplexities and troubles of soul ; even also in more public affairs. It was to him that San Filippo went for counsel when San Filippo himself was consulted by San Carlo Borromeo concerning the constitutions of his new society of Oblate Priests. Felice dealt with everyone who sought him " with rustic simplicity and without ceremony," as Fra Marco would say ; he was no respecter of persons. To the powerful Cardinal Montalto—he who was to be Sixtus V, but had once been a Franciscan friar—Felice said on the eve of the Papal election : " when you are Pope, act as a Pope for God's glory and the good of the Church ; else it were better you had remained a simple friar." To the Cardinal of Santa Severina he once administered a well-merited rebuke ; and few there were who dared rebuke that imperious prelate. " My lord cardinal," said Felice, " you have been appointed protector of the Order to protect it, not to meddle in matters that belong to the office of the superiors."

One time when the city was stricken with plague and famine, Felice became questor for the poor of Rome and not merely for the friary. At first his superiors hesitated to give the desired permission. Felice answered their thought with a bold humility : " Think you, my fathers, that the friars will starve because the poor are fed ? Believe me if the poor are fed, the friars will not go hungry " : and the superiors accepted the rebuke. So for a year Fra Felice fed many of the poor of Rome with the food he gained for them by his daily quest.

At last, when he was nearing his eightieth year, the end of

his labours came to him. Only with difficulty could he be prevailed upon to take to his bed : he would still be up and doing, even if only to comfort some other sick friar. When at length he could stand no longer, he exclaimed : " The ass can go no more ; so he has fallen down." True to himself to the end, he improvised a hymn as he lay on his death-bed, a simple verse which he sang repeatedly with great content:

" Jesu, Jesu, O my love,
Why tarry ? Come, take my heart ;
And neither now nor ever again
Give back my heart to me."

And so he passed away.

Fra Felice, as we have said, became a Capuchin in the dark days when the congregation was suffering for Ochino's apostasy ; he lived to see the Reform a flourishing congregation no longer confined to Italy but embarking upon its great adventure beyond the Alps. Within the thirty-nine years of his own apostolate in the streets of Rome he had seen the city transformed once again into a nursery of saints ; a saint had again occupied St. Peter's chair ;[5] another was in the college of cardinals ;[6] yet another who had been once a Capuchin novice nursed the sick in the hospitals of Rome.[7] Then there were Ignatius, the founder of the Society of Jesus and his second successor, Francis Borgia, and the beloved San Filippo ; many others too, who were not formally canonised but whose holiness was evident to men, saintly followers of the saints. The Rome which hailed Felice a saint was a different Rome from that which Matteo da Bascio had looked upon in the Jubilee year of 1525. But the transformation had not been accomplished without suffering. It had been ushered in by the horror of the sack of Rome ; it had proceeded under fear of the devastating Protestant revolt, the inrush of which had indeed been checked in Italy at a great price, but which was even still waging a bitter warfare in every country north of the Alps. Then there had been the fierce pontificate of Paul IV when the terror encompassed not only the heretics but

5 St. Pius V.
6 Saint Charles Borromeo.
7 Saint Camillus de Lellis.

even the orthodox Catholics whose way of thinking on all matters was not acceptable to that dour Pontiff. Rome had suffered, but so had all who had shared in the work of purification ; some not of their own will, others voluntarily as the price which must be paid for an errant world's redemption. With all his gaiety Fra Felice had suffered too. He might make light of his bleeding feet as he trudged along the frost-bitten streets, or of his bodily weariness which he would never confess. To himself he was one of the sinners upon whom God's judgment had fallen for his own good ; as he said, he dared not pamper himself. Luxury and the pampering of self had brought the Christian world to the pass it was in. In his broad charity Felice felt that he was somehow guilty of this universal sin, and in his own person he must repair the evil as far as he himself might. That was the secret of his self-crucifixion—a secret which only great lovers, San Filippo for instance, fully understood ; yet in a measure it was also the secret of those early Capuchins from whom Fra Felice had learned his life lesson. In their hard and austere life they believed themselves called not merely to the saving of their own souls ; with Christ they were bearing the iniquity of the world and atoning for its sin, the sin they made their own in their charity towards their fellow men. That was the primary purpose of their life, as it was of the Gospel which they aspired to fulfil. So had St. Francis lived and suffered in his love for his crucified Lord.

The root-principle of the life of these Capuchins was, therefore, the charity of Christ the Redeemer ; and to exhibit that charity in their self-crucifixion and in doing the works of mercy set forth in the Gospel, was their vocation.

In Fra Felice this vocation was manifested in its purest simplicity so that all could see and understand ; and as it was embodied in him it became as it were the sign-manual of the Capuchin in the eyes of the Roman people. To this day it is by Fra Felice and not by Ochino, or even by the most saintly of their popular preachers, that the Capuchin is judged as true metal by the Romans.

So it came about that a new glamour was thrown over the Capuchin congregation in the course of Felice's thirty-nine years of tramping the streets of Rome, a glamour different from that thrown by the glory of Ochino in the day of his

popularity, and more true to the inherent spirit of the Reform : it had much to do with the favour with which the Capuchins were now regarded at the Papal Court.

(ii)

Fra Felice had lived through that crucial period in any active society when the first enthusiasm and novelty of the vocation being spent, the society must settle down in the world in which it is to live and find its permanent place in the larger society of men. It is the period which determines the social value of the ideals or principles upon which the society is founded, and in the determination proves whether the motive principle of its foundation is of more than ephemeral utility. For no society can long endure which does not play its part in the wider world and contribute something of value to the common life of man. Nor again can it long endure unless it is capable of standing the test of the unheroic votaries of its ideals as well as of the heroic. Its vitality demands the conservation of its ideals and principles ; yet no less does it demand a freedom of adaptation to circumtance. By the time of Fra Felice's death the Capuchin congregation was no longer a company of a few hundred ; it numbered nearly six thousand friars divided into twenty Italian provinces[8] apart from the inchoate provinces in France and Spain, Switzerland and the Low Countries. That in itself necessitated some departure from the earliest forms. The small hermitages of the first years would no longer house the brethren ; they must needs enlarge their friaries. Nor with such a number could the first rigour " hardly human " be maintained. To Mattia da Salo[9] the friend and biographer of Fra Felice, it seemed that the joyous lay-brother was sent by God to teach the second generation of Capuchins how to serve God in their somewhat changed

[8] The Italian provinces were those of Abruzzi, Basilicata, Bologna, Brescia, Calabria, Corsica, Cosentina, Genoa, Marches, Messina, Milan, Naples, Palermo, Apulia, Rhegio, Rome, S. Angelo, Umbria, Syracuse, Tuscany and Venice. cf. *Anal. Ord. Cap.*, vol. xxi, pp. 337-342 ; *Bullar. Ord. Cap.*, *passim* At the General Chapter of 1587 the number of friars was estimated at 5953, *vide Anal. Ord. Cap.* V, p. 107.

[9] cf. *infra*, p. 203.

conditions. " For now," he writes, " since the congregation could not continue in the rigour of such great hardship (as was in the beginning) it became necessary to build places and to have a regulated life like other Orders. It had now taken a form which, conjoined with the true and pure observance of the Rule, could be for the service of God and the edification of our neighbour and could give opportunity to all who wished to do penance."[10] The friary, or *convento*, had in fact displaced the primitive hermitage built of loam and wattles, and a more organised discipline had succeeded to the free fervour of the original small communities.

The Capuchins had been happy in such an organiser as Bernardino d'Asti, whose administrative ability both as Vicar General and as Procurator had carried the congregation successfully through the first critical period of its development. With his eye always upon the essentials he had transformed the loosely organised communities under the personal rule of Lodovico da Fossombrone, into a compact company with an effective constitutional government, whilst at the same time his sagacious ruling had converted the first enthusiasms into intelligent principles. There was, for instance, his ruling as to the wearing of the cloak—a petty detail it might seem, yet at the moment a test case between an unintelligent and a possibly fanatical enthusiasm on the one side and vital principle on the other. Was it lawful to wear the cloak, seeing that no mention of it is made in the Rule which forbids the wearing of more than two tunics? Some contention it would seem had arisen over the question ; the more rigid interpreters regarding the cloak as a forbidden luxury. Bernardino decided, in a carefully written answer, that the use of the cloak had been sanctioned by the practice of St. Francis himself and his first followers, and therefore was not opposed to the *mind* of St. Francis ; but that, according to the practice of St. Francis, it might be used only by those who needed it against the cold. A simple answer, yet containing a true canon of interpretation for matters of wider import than the use of the cloak.[11] So in all his rulings one finds a tense enthusiasm tempered by saga-

[10] *Acta SS.*, loc. cit., p. 210.
[11] See the letter of Bernardino d'Asti in Boverius, *Annales, anno* 1550, I.

cious common sense ; an idealism held fast to practical judgment.

It was upon this foundation of a fervid enthusiasm tempered by common sense, shared with Bernardino d'Asti by most of the leaders of the Capuchins, that the congregation avoided the two pitfalls which might have brought it to disaster : an unbalanced enthusiasm such as had at an earlier period brought the zealots for primitive Franciscan observance into disrepute ; and that "carnal prudence" which the zealots denounced, whereby in times past the primitive idealism of the Order had been sacrificed for the sake of what seemed to many a wider social utility.

In the early years of the Capuchin Reform, neither of these dangers was much in evidence. Ochino's blaze into fame had indeed contained an element of danger to the unworldly simplicity of the Reform, but the danger from Ochino had passed away in sorrow. Some few years later, as we have seen, Eusebio d'Ancona had had to rebuke certain of the younger preachers who, ambitious to make a name for themselves as popular preachers, had sought a cheap advertisement by cultivating a flowery eloquence. There had been one or two incidents of friars who succumbed to the temptation of allowing a friary to be built which was not in accordance with the strict poverty of the Order ; but these unfaithful ones had been so cursed by God that they were regarded as an example of unfaithfulness.[12] On the whole the friars had avoided remarkably the danger of their popularity.

Even more remarkable was the sanity of their enthusiasm for the primitive observance, considering that mentally and historically they were the inheritors of the Spiritual tradition in the Franciscan Order—that tradition whose sway had been marked by many a fanatical outburst as unintelligent and unsocial as it was sincere and fervid. We have seen how the General Chapter of 1536, under the guidance of Bernardino d'Asti, had turned down the proposition of Lodovico da Fossombrone that the Capuchins should live a purely contemplative life like that of the Camaldolese, and

[12] See the story related by Boverius of the friar who built a friary " between Lodi and Piacenza," which exceeded the limits of poverty; and who died in despair without receiving the sacraments (*Annales, anno* 1565).

put aside preaching and active service for others. Lodovico perhaps had in mind the example of his fellow townsman, the well-known "Spiritual" leader, Angelo da Clareno. Yet it was to the testimony of the three companions of St. Francis, enshrined in the *Legenda Antiqua*, and to the "Spiritual" literature generally, that the Capuchins constantly appealed for their own justification.[13] What really saved them from the fanaticism and fate which overtook some former "Spiritual" communities, was their recognition of the social duties implied in the Franciscan vocation and their conviction that Franciscan poverty was of value only as it exhibited the charity of Christ the Redeemer both towards God and man. That was the bedrock of their sanity—their recognition that " love is the fulfilment of the law." It was not until a later period that somewhat of the fanatical "Spiritual" temper tinged the attitude of certain Capuchins in their controversy with the Observant apologists in the seventeenth century. Then on both sides temper ran warm ; in the Observant writers there was a recrudescence of the same temper with which the Friars of the Community of any earlier time had pursued the "Spirituals" ; on the Capuchin side the writers showed that argumentative fervour divorced from religious charity which had led the combative "Spirituals" of the fourteenth century into sectarian polemic. But again the social loyalties of the Capuchins as a body, their loyalties to the Church and to the service they owed the world, prevented the disedifying polemic running the course of an earlier day. No such temper had shown itself in the conduct of the Capuchin defence in the days when the congregation was struggling for existence ; the Capuchins then and throughout the sixteenth century were too intent upon realities to lose their temper over theories.

The character of the congregation, at once mystical and practical, as it developed under Bernardino d'Asti and his successors during its formative period, is revealed in the new constitutions which gradually took shape. Based upon the original constitutions of Albacina which they substantially embodied, they assumed a form unique amongst the constitutions of Religious Orders. The constitutions as drawn up at Albacina were terse declarations of the laws which were to

[13] See Appendix II : Vol. II.

govern the daily lives of the brethren in their common life: a series of statutes for the regulation of the community. At the General Chapter of 1535, not only were additional statutes added, but the very form was changed.[14] The constitutions were divided into twelve chapters according to the number of chapters in the Franciscan Rule and the statutes grouped so as to form in some sort a practical commentary on the Rule. So far it was only a matter of arrangement and the addition of new statutes. But a radical change was made in the form in which the statutes were presented, a change indicative of the mental atmosphere in which the statutes were framed. The constitutions now are no longer a series of statutes; they are even more markedly an *apologia* for the Capuchin life, declaring the spirit in which the congregation is to be formed: and it is in this form that they were further developed in the General Chapters of 1552 and 1575. As they were thus shaped, the Capuchin constitutions would be the despair of the merely legal mind, for they appeal to a law beyond the positive, to the law of the spirit intent upon a more perfect fulfilment of the chosen life than any positive law can enshrine. They declare the positive law, yet lead up to it by a profession of faith which at times makes the ordinance when it is arrived at, fall flat as a mere afterthought. For instance, take this beginning: "Conscious as we are that the Evangelical teaching, wholly pure and heavenly, and utterly perfect, and brought down to us from heaven by the most sweet Son of God, and preached and taught by Him both in deeds and words,... alone teaches and shows the direct way of coming to God; and that all men are therefore obliged to observe it, especially Christians who have so promised in holy baptism, and yet more we Friars Minor, since St. Francis in the beginning and at the end of his Rule has made express mention of the observance of the sacred Gospel; his Rule too being naught other than the marrow of the Gospel; and as in his Testament he says that it was revealed to him that we should live after the manner of the Gospel: therefore in order that the friars shall have always before the eyes of their mind the teaching and life of our Saviour Jesus Christ and after the example of the virgin

[14] See text of the constitutions of 1535 (recently discovered) in *Liber Memorialis Ord FF. Min. Capp.* (Romæ, 1928), 356 *seq.*

Cecilia carry the sacred Gospel at all times in their heart, it is ordained that every morning except Friday in every house a lesson of the sacred Gospel be read at table."[15]

Or again, as concerning poverty: "Since most high poverty was the beloved spouse of Christ the Son of God and of our father St. Francis, His humble servant, the friars must consider that it cannot be violated without grievously displeasing God; and he who offends against her, verily he touches the apple of his eye. The seraphic Father was accustomed to say that the true Friar Minor must esteem money as no better than dust and even fly from it and dread it as a venomous serpent. How often our loving and zealous Father, foreseeing in spirit that many forsaking this pearl of the Gospel would fall so low as to receive legacies, wills and superfluous alms, wept over their damnation saying that that friar was nigh to perdition who made more account of money than of filth; and experience can show that no sooner does a friar cast from him holy poverty than he falls into all other enormous and abominable vices; wherefore the friars shall strive, after the example of Christ and His beloved Mother, to be poor in all earthly things that they may be rich in divine grace and holy virtue and in heavenly riches. Above all, let them beware when they visit any sick person lest they induce him directly or indirectly, to leave us any temporal thing; and even should the sick person desire so to do, they must resist him all they can, remembering that they cannot possess at the same time riches and poverty."[16]

The character of the new constitutions, here noted, marks the return of the Capuchin Reform to the freedom of spirit of the first Franciscan days; it was so that St. Francis would lead his brethren by the spirit rather than by the law.

One ordinance was of fundamental import as linking up the Capuchins with the long line of friars who through the centuries had striven to retrieve the spirit of the primitive Franciscan days: the ordinance which decreed the observance of the Testament of St. Francis. It runs:

"And to the end that as true and legitimate sons of Jesus Christ our Father and Lord, born again to Him in St

[15] cf. *Le Prime Costituzioni*, op. cit., p. 39. On Fridays, according to another ordinance, the Rule of St. Francis was to be read instead of the Gospel.

[16] *Le Prime Constituzioni*, pp. 58-59.

Francis, we may be participators in His inheritance ; it is ordained that all observe the Testament of this most blessed Father which he wrote for us when, nigh unto his holy death and adorned with the sacred stigmata, full of fervour and the Holy Ghost, he most ardently desired our salvation. This Testament we accept as a spiritual gloss and exposition of our Rule since it was written by this our Father to the end that we might the better and in a more Catholic spirit observe the Rule we have vowed. And since we are sons of the seraphic Father only in so far as we imitate his life and doctrine . . . therefore we exhort the friars that they each one strive to imitate this our good Father who was given us to be our rule, model and example ; and indeed our Lord Jesus Christ in him : and not only to imitate him in the Rule and Testament, but also in all his fervent words and heavenly deeds : to which end let them read frequently his life and the lives of his holy companions."[17] In this passage we hear the cry of the "Spiritual" Friars through all the years that separated the Capuchin Reform from the days of Brother Elias ; but it is that cry divested of all the rancour and defiance that had been imported into it by the bitter controversies of the fourteenth century. And in truth it would seem that those who built up the new constitutions had foreseen the possibility of a renewal of the old bitter controversy and had of deliberate purpose restated the "Spiritual" tradition in its purest form and with the "sweet reasonableness" of a pure charity.

But whilst on the one hand the new constitutions assert the essentially mystical character and outlook of the Franciscan vocation, they also in their growth reveal an alertness to the actualities of life without which the mystical temperament becomes ineffective and unsocial. The statutes or ordinances are in fact largely a practical commentary upon the abuses which had crept into the religious orders—and particularly into the Franciscan Order—and had conduced to their relaxation in the period before the Capuchin Reform ; in part they decree a return to older laws or cus-

[17] *ibid.*, pp. 40-41. For those who are not acquainted with Franciscan history, it may be noted that the observance of the Testament was one of the points of contention between the Zelanti or "Spirituals" and the "friars of the community."

toms in the Franciscan Order ; in part they reproduce decrees of the Council of Trent ; and in part they are ordinances indicative of the new spirit and particular purpose of the new Reform as declared in the original constitutions of Albacina. In two matters did the Council of Trent cause a change in the original constitution of the Reform. No longer might lay-brothers be appointed superiors ;[18] and the Capuchins like other religious must establish regular study houses for the theological training of their students.

One other provision too was made, not contemplated in the primitive constitutions—that for the sending of friars to convert the infidels both in the new worlds " recently discovered by the Spaniards and Portuguese," and in that field of missionary enterprise long cultivated by the Franciscans, the lands of the Mahommedans.

Yet wise and practical as the positive statutes are, the genius of the Capuchin constitutions lies in their declarations of faith and their lofty exhortations to the life of the Spirit ; it is in these that the law of the congregation is really enshrined. It is a law only to be apprehended—as any may perceive who reads them—by a vivid faith and obeyed by a free and sincere love of the mystic ideal of life they tell of. And in that the Capuchin congregation stands apart with those societies whose life is a freedom of spirit and whose compelling law is loyalty to the ideal they worship. With such societies the outer garment counts but little for strength and security ; it is the spirit that matters.

(iii)

So during the lifetime of Fra Felice certain changes had begun in the outer life of the Capuchin congregation ; as we have said, the *convento* had mostly displaced the hermitage ; a more ordered regime had succeeded to the loosely-bound community life ; stone had taken the place of wattle and loam. In other words, the primitive association had definitely become an organised society in fact as well as in name.

Mattia da Salo, himself of the second generation of Capuchins but attached by personal loyalties to many of the

[18] By decree of Pius V they were, however, allowed to retain their votes in the local Chapters for the election of delegates to the Provincial Chapters.

heroic figures of the earlier days, speaks in his biography of Fra Felice of "a diminution of fervour" which had followed upon "the first rigours," but which had been restored in "the regulated life" of which Fra Felice was a shining example.[19] The new constitutions had done their work. They had "regulated" the congregation without destroying its spirit—no small achievement when you have to deal with a body of men whose bond is the Spirit. Thus it was with an accession of power and of conscious assurance of itself that the congregation emerged from the perilous period of its first social development.

A new type—and yet the same type—of friar now comes on the scene; one who has been educated in his social responsibilities as a member of a wide-flung society and of a society that has found its place in the yet wider society of the Catholic Church; and still is true in all essential qualities to the ideals and aspirations which gave the Capuchin Reform its birth.

Such a one was Girolamo da Pistoia, the first *Praelector* or Master of the Capuchin theological school established in Rome in 1567.[20] Girolamo had married in his youth, but before he could take his bride to the home he had prepared for her, she fell sick and died. In his grief he threw up all secular ambition and became a friar amongst the Observants. With these he led a life of edifying austerity and study. But, thirsting for deeper and more practical knowledge, his mind found no satisfaction in the ordinary studies of the schools, and he was led to the study of St. Bonaventura whose works had long ceased to be read in the schools. From St. Bonaventura he had gained more than knowledge; he had learned that training of the will in knowledge which was the purpose of platonic philosophy and of that theological tradition in Christendom of which St. Bonaventura is a type. With this training Girolamo grew dissatisfied with himself and the easy observance around him.

Thus he had been drawn to the Capuchin Reform. His student habit remained with him; so that even when abroad

[19] *Acta SS.*, loc. cit., p. 210.

[20] cf. Boverius, *Annales*, *anno* 1570, XXI-XXVII; *Flores Seraphici*, I, p. 55, *seq.*; Bernardus a Bononia: *Bibliotheca Scriptorum Ord. Cap.* (Venetiis, 1747), p. 121.

cf. Sisto da Pisa, *Storia dei Cappuccini Toscani* (Firenze, 1906), I, p. 104, *seq.*

preaching, he would spend half the night between prayer and study. Yet would he at times willingly put aside his studies to serve the sick in the hospitals or fulfil other calls of charity. He was particularly pitiful towards unfortunate women whose circumstances in life made temptation easy. At Florence one Lent, he induced a rich lady to found a home for homeless girls ; and on no subject did he preach with such pathetic persuasiveness as on the temptations of Magdalen.[21] As a theologian he was held in repute. He took part in the proceedings of the Council of Trent on its reassembling under Pius IV, and later was appointed personal theologian to Pius V. By this Pontiff he was frequently consulted on matters affecting the welfare of the Church, and such was the Pope's regard for him that Girolamo would have found himself clothed with the cardinal's purple but that at the first news he threw himself at the Pope's feet and begged to be allowed to remain a simple friar. Pius V, himself a saint, understood, yet would not allow the earnest petition unless Girolamo would nominate a prelate worthy to fill the place he himself refused ; and Girolamo named Giulio Santorio, archbishop of Santa Severina. When in 1567 he was appointed *Praelector* of the newly established *studium generale*, Girolamo gave to the Capuchin school a distinct character by introducing into it the method and teaching of St. Bonaventura; and so thorough was he, that he planned a new edition of St. Bonaventura's works which was later completed during the pontificate of Sixtus V.[22] His end was a worthy crowning of his life. At the head of a company of thirty Capuchins he was sent by Pius V to minister to the spiritual needs of the Papal fleet in the crusade against the Turks in 1570. He and two of his companions died in serving the plague-stricken crews as they awaited the mustering of the Christian forces off the island of Crete. Girolamo was buried in a church on the island ; but when the war was over Cardinal Giulio Santorio had his body brought back to Italy and laid to rest in the graveyard of the friars at Caserta.[23]

[21] See the sermon on the conversion of Mary Magdalen in the form of a dialogue between Martha and " her young sister" in *Della Prediche dell' humil' servo di Christo, F. Girolamo da Pistoja* (Bologna, 1567).

[22] cf. *infra*, Vol. II, ch. xiv.

[23] cf. *Regestum, Bullar. Ord. Cap.*, 354.

An incident which happened on the road to Venice, where Girolamo was to join the Venetian fleet, reveals his simple faith. He and a companion, Fra Anselmo da Pietramolara, were making the journey on foot, and one evening found themselves in a woodland tract with no shelter in sight for the night ; and that day they had journeyed far and were both hungry and weary. Fra Anselmo, soldier though he had once been, grew discouraged at the prospect of a night in the open with a gnawing emptiness for company. Thereupon Girolamo bade him be of good cheer, and kneeling, prayed to the Holy Family of Nazareth to grant them a hospitable shelter. With words of trust in God's Providence he led his companion forward until after a little while they descried a cottage in a wood. Thither they went and were hospitably admitted and found themselves the guests of an old man and his wife and child. The story relates that when the two friars awoke " in the morning greatly refreshed " they found themselves lying in a meadow by the roadside. To his astonished companion Girolamo remarked : " We did not vainly seek a shelter, Anselmo : See how St. Joseph with the Virgin Mother and the Divine Child have entertained us." To which story various interpretations might be given ; but it helps us to understand the soul of Girolamo da Pistoia.

Of a different cast of character to Girolamo was his companion on the road to Venice, Anselmo da Pietramolara :[24] yet he too deserves mention as one of a class frequently to be found in Capuchin history. A Southern Italian, passionate and impetuous but single-minded and devoted to whatever task he had in hand, Anselmo was a soldier by temperament. He had in fact been a soldier before he became a Capuchin, and had taken his soldiering with the careless intensity of a soldier of fortune, recking little of what might befall beyond the day. As a religious he seems to have been much of the same disposition : whether in long watchings of prayer or hard penitential discipline or the active duties of the apostolic ministry : always intense, always ready. After Girolamo's death, he returned to Rome ; and the next year was appointed by the Pope superior of the Capuchins who were to serve as chaplains to the Papal contingent of the allied fleet in the last crusade against the Turks. No captain in that

[24] Boverius, *Annales*, *anno* 1584 ; d'Aremberg, op. cit., III, p. 86.

well-manned fleet took his duties more seriously than Anselmo. It was his part to see that the men who were to fight for the cross should fight as soldiers of the cross ; and to this end he and his fellow Capuchins preached daily as that vast armada of two hundred ships of the line went in search of the Turkish fleet: they lived amongst the men as pastors with their flock. When at length the hostile fleets joined issue at Lepanto, Anselmo and his Capuchins were in the midst of the fray, encouraging their men and attending to the wounded. Three Capuchins were killed in the battle: Anselmo himself was wounded and his habit was in shreds from the arrows which pierced it ; yet till the victory was won he remained at his post, inspiring his fighting flock with his own courage and assurance of victory. " The Capuchins bore themselves splendidly," wrote the Lieutenant-Commander, Marc' Antonio Colonna, in his report to the Pope ; and to the Vicar General of the Order he wrote begging that Anselmo might be allowed to accompany the fleet on its next offensive in the following year. But when that futile adventure was over, Anselmo went back to his friary where he gave himself with a simple devotion to prayer and penance, till some few years later, in 1578,[25] he was sent as Commissary to govern the friars in France, where he again distinguished himself by his service of the sick at a time when Paris was stricken with an epidemic of fever. At last, worn out with labours and austerities, he returned to Rome to make his report concerning the French provinces. Then seeking rest, he journeyed as far as Camerino in the Marches of Ancona and there, like an over-tired child, laid himself down, exclaiming : " This is my rest." In three days he was dead.

(iv)

One there was amongst those chaplains to the Papal fleet who five years later became a central figure in that drama of death and suffering, the great plague, which swept over Northern Italy, in the years 1576 and 1577. Fra Paolo da

[25] *Anal. Ord. Cap.* V, p. 105.

Salo[26] was one of two brothers—*par nobile fratrum*—whose names are remembered to-day in the history of their country: a third brother too, was a man of no mean parts. All three were Capuchins. But whereas Fra Giovanni, the youngest, is known only as an editor of books,[27] Paolo, and his yet more famous brother Mattia—*i due Bellintani*—were men of action as well as of books. Of Fra Mattia we shall have much to say further on in this story: his part was played on a wider stage.

Fra Paolo was the son of an ancient and wealthy family who had left their home in Gazzano[28] to settle in Salo while Fra Paolo was but a child. Of his early years as a Capuchin we know nothing, and he might have remained one of those hidden heroes of ordinary life, had not the plague found him in the friary of Lodi when the Podestà of Crema came telling how the dead lay thick in Venice and there was none to bury them. With pleading words Paolo wrote to the Visitor General of the friars in Milan, begging "for the love of Christ, Who gave His life for mine," to be allowed to offer his services to stricken Venice. But meanwhile the plague had reached Milan and had struck that city and its territories with sudden and unexampled violence. Bravely at the first outburst had the saintly archbishop, Carlo Borromeo, taken upon himself the sorrow of his people. When others fled, he refused to flee. Daily the mortality increased: the civic authorities were powerless to arrest it; and the terror of the citizens was worse than death. San Carlo—for even now men in their hearts had canonised him—moved fearlessly amongst the stricken population, comforting the sick, ministering the sacraments and organising relief: yet did the terror get worse and with the terror the demoralisation of the city.[29] An appeal to the superiors of the religious orders for chaplains to serve the hospitals at first brought

[26] cf. Frederico Odorici: *I Due Bellintani da Salo* (Milano, 1857); P. Valdimiro da Bergamo: *I Conventi ed I Cappuccini Bresciani* (Milano, 1891), p. 99, *seq.*; *ibid.*, p. 535, *seq.* Concerning the family of the Bellintani, cf. Valdimiro da Bergamo, *ibid.*, p. 213.

F. Paolo Bellintano da Salo in *Eco di S. Francisco* (Sorrento). Fase XXII, 30 Nov. 1877.

[27] cf. Valdamiro da Bergamo, *ibid.*, p. 178-179. Giovanni edited four books of Fra Mattia.

[28] The house where they resided is still known as *Casa Bellintane.*

[29] It is said that 100,000 died of the plague in the city and its territories.

little comfort to San Carlo ; only Fra Giacomo da Milano, Visitor of the Capuchins,[30] promised to call for volunteers to minister to the sick.[31] It was then that he received Fra Paolo's letter and readily gave him permission to serve the sick ; but at Milan, not in Venice. Paola replied that it mattered not to him in what place he might serve, so that he might serve. Without delay he set forth for Milan. His journey was broken by a bout of fever ; and when the fever left him he was still too weak to walk. Anxious to serve, he wrote to San Carlo and asked that a vehicle might be sent to bring him to the city. Meanwhile twenty Capuchins had been accepted for service ; some were placed in the hospital of San Dionigi in the city, others in the hospitals of Vittoria and Monza in Milanese territory. But it was to the lazaretto outside the walls of Milan, where the sick were herded in thousands, that Fra Paolo was personally conducted by San Carlo. Four friars had already been placed there, but three of them were dead ; and their places were filled with other friars awaiting the call to service. It was a ghastly service ; in the lazaretto as in the city, vice was let loose in its most hideous forms. The hired nurses neglected and robbed the sick and dying ; unfortunate women plied their trade even there ; the sick were often carted to the common grave before they were dead ; when night fell the lazaretto was made hideous with ribald dancing and obscene revelry as if in defiance of death. There was no physician in attendance ; the only medical service was that of the barbers—the unskilled apothecaries of the day. Even food was lacking owing to the dishonesty of the tradesmen who gave short measure, and of the attendants who purloined the food for their own profit.[32] Such was the condition of the lazaretto

[30] See Fra Giacomo's letter to the Bishop of Brescia, giving an account of the early days of the plague, in *Anal. Ord. Cap.*, vol. xxvi, p. 249, *seq.*

[31] cf. Paolo da Salo : *Dialogo della Peste*, cap. xi : "*Solo il molto reverendo Commissario di Provincia chiamato il P. F. Giacomo Calderino da Milano famigliarissimo del signor Carlo Borromeo disse che . . . . se avisse trovato alcuno atto e volenteroso di andari a questa santa opera, gli avrebbi dato ogni licenza. Gli altri superiorifecero ancora loro la sua scusa, e cosi ognuno se ne ritorno al suo convento.*" Later other Orders sent helpers (*Dialogo*, cap. xv), amongst them a contingent of San Filippo's priests from the Roman Oratory.

[32] W. H. Ainsworth's description in *Old St. Paul's* of the demoralised state of London during the plague of London might almost have been taken from the contemporary accounts of the plague in Milan in 1576. cf. *Dialogo della Peste*, op. cit., cap. v, *et passim.*

when Paolo was appointed governor with full powers, as the city magistrates wordily decreed : " to cause our ordinances to be observed and to punish malefactors and examine and interrogate even with torture those suspect of crime "—in truth to do what the city fathers found themselves unable to do, to bring order into disorder, to drive out the ghouls who fattened on the misery of the stricken and cleanse the lazaretto from its rampant vice.

Paolo's first step was to separate those detained on suspicion of being infected from the really sick, with whom they had hitherto been herded. Next he organised regular supplies, and eliminated the dishonest trader ; and established a more efficient medical service in place of the " barbers." His hardest work was with the ghouls and conscienceless nurses and with the unhappy women whom the dread disease itself could not keep from the lazaretto. Yet within a few weeks, with merely a handful of police to comb out the unhappy colony, he freed the place of these vampires, though not until his whipping-posts had become the terror of those who plundered the sick and the dead. There was an iron will and relentless judgment behind the tenderness of Fra Paolo. Before long the mortality in the lazaretto and in the city rapidly diminished ; and the moral tone of the lazaretto was transformed. The ribald revelries gave place to religious services ; the obscene song to the religious chant ; the hideousness of hell to the resigned peace or hope of a Christian sufferer.

The plague ran its course in Milan for one long year. The carnage was terrible especially in the earlier months ; yet at the end Milan congratulated itself that its fate was not so bad as in many other cities where more than half the population had died ; and for that the thanks were due to the cool-headed judgment and untiring energy of two men, San Carlo Borromeo and Fra Paolo da Salo.

Milan breathed again calmly in August 1577 ; it was free of the plague. But from Brescia, Paolo's " fatherland," came the wail of a city devastated and suffering still. Thither Fra Paolo with a band of Capuchins now hastened, sped by the goodwill of the Milanese in their sympathy with their still stricken neighbours. " With God's help," wrote the magistrates of Milan, "our own need is practically over whilst

Brescia, as we hear to our infinite sorrow, is in a bad way ; wherefore we are willing to let them go." Yet the Milanese would have the Bresciani know that Fra Paolo was no ordinary man ; to the good work he had done " solely for the love of our Lord " both for the bodies and souls of the people during his government of the lazaretto, they bore eloquent testimony.[33]

At Brescia, Paolo took charge of the lazaretto whilst others of his brethren spread themselves over the city to attend the sick. Again, as at Milan, he brought order into the confusion he found. At his coming in August there were four thousand persons in the lazaretto ; by the end of September the number was reduced to seven hundred :[34] before November the plague was almost wiped out of the city. Then Paolo and his band of friars left the city to serve the sick in the outlying districts of the diocese ; till at the end of another four months all Brescian territory was free. The Capuchins having done their work now returned to their friaries—all except Fra Paolo who, undaunted by his two years fight with death, went to fight it again in plague-stricken Marseilles. And after that Fra Paolo is found no more in history. He was perhaps the Fra Paolo whowas guardian of the friary at Treviglio in Lombardy in 1590. But wherever he finished his days, the remembrance of the first plague was with him a vivid memory ; and for the instruction of others, he left at his death a manuscript treatise in the form of a dialogue,[35] relating his experiences and the measures he adopted. Generously he gives the praise to San Carlo whom he evidently worshipped as the ideal bishop and pastor, as indeed did all Lombardy after that terrible visitation ; and he mentions as worthy of honour a number of highly placed citizens who at the risk of their lives served in the hospitals. But he could be caustic in his description of the stupidity of the official regulations, as in the instance he gives of his

[33] Letter of the "praeses et conservatores sanitatis mediolani," in P. Valdimiro, op. cit., pp. 541-542.

[34] See the letter of Fra Giandomenico to San Carlo Borromeo, dated September 28. P. Valdimiro, op. cit., p. 543. In Brescia according to the letter written by the bishop to the Pope, the mortality had reached 300 deaths a day, *ibid.*, p. 544.

[35] cf. Frederico Oderici : *I due Bellintani*, op. cit. ; P. Idelfonso da Como : *Il Dialogo della Peste di P. Paolo Bellintani* in *L'Italia Franciscana*, Ottobre-Dicembre, 1926, p. 324, *seq.*

first coming to Milan before he went there to serve the sick. He had come from Brescia, where the plague had already made its appearance. At the gate of Milan he was refused admission lest he should bring infection into the city ; but his friends, as many who wished, were allowed to visit him outside the gate ! In his dialogue Paolo pleaded for an immediate segregation of the infected at the very start ; for an effective disciplinary supervision and for organised supplies of food and medicine ; he dealt too, with the religious organisation, quoting the ordinances of San Carlo as a model of prudence and wisdom. To us to-day his recommendations seem elementary principles of common sense. But we to-day are benefitting by the uncommon sense of such men as Fra Paolo da Salo.

CHAPTER VII

THE CAPUCHINS CROSS THE ALPS

(i)

It was in 1574 that the Capuchins were formally allowed by the Pope to make settlements beyond the Alps. In truth the congregation had reached that stage in its existence when an expansion of its boundaries could hardly any longer be denied it. From the beginning of its existence it had manifested that instinct which in secular life makes for conquests peaceful or otherwise, an instinct which cannot be denied, if those who are moved by it would live. This instinct had shown itself when Lodovico da Fossombrone had brought the nascent Reform out of its seclusion in the Marches of Ancona and planted it in Rome, and again in its continued increase and rapid extension throughout the Italian provinces in spite of opposition and attempted suppressions.

Historians have attributed the survival and increase of the Capuchins to the unworldliness and austerity of their lives ; but that is not the full explanation. Unworldly and austere they were, as some thought, almost to the verge of an inhuman endurance. But they were alive with a spiritual life which was in touch with the fundamental needs of the human spirit of their time. In the utter simplicity of their religious appeal, they struck a chord which vibrated with sincerity and truth in a world conscious of the insincerities with which it had long been doped. The fundamental simplicity of the Capuchins in their quest for the spiritual life had been their strength, and it had brought them very near both to God and to the heart of their fellow men. The problem they had faced in their own life was in fact in its elemental issue the problem that lay in the religious restlessness, and even in the defiance of religion, which then stirred not one people but a world of peoples. In their activities covering the whole of the Italian peninsula during the past

fifty years, the Capuchins had become more and more conscious that they had a mission to men extending beyond the confines of their own religious observance of the Franciscan Rule ; their social kinship with the world had revealed itself more and more clearly and comprehensively ; and with this clearer consciousness the tide of development had set in which was to break down many boundaries, not least the geographical.

On several occasions the Capuchins had been petitioned to establish themselves outside Italy. The first petition had come to them in the days of their first organisation, and it came from certain of the clergy and people of Ireland, whose delegates appeared at a General Chapter and besought the capitular fathers to send friars to that country, or failing that, to give them a copy of the constitutions according to which certain religious houses might be reformed ; but the Chapter was unable to accede to either request.[1] About the same time two Observant Friars from the Netherlands came to Rome and joined the Capuchins with the intention of returning to their own country and introducing the Reform there. They did become Capuchins but were not allowed by the Pope to return and settle in the Netherlands. One of these was the theologian, Franciscus Titelmann.[2] Then in 1567 had come the petition of the Discalceati friars in Spain to be allowed to join the Capuchin congregation.[3] More successful, as it eventually proved, was the request made to the Capuchin Vicar General at the Council of Trent in 1563 by the Cardinal of Lorraine that Capuchins should be sent to France.[4] At the moment nothing came of the project, and ten years were to elapse before the matter was seriously taken in hand. In the meantime that happened which was to bring about the Cardinal's desire and to indite a new chapter in Capuchin history, in some manner in the fashion of its first beginning. And once again a young Observant friar was the hero of the part.[5]

[1] Bernardino da Colpetrazzo. I, p. 494.

[2] cf. *supra* [3] cf. *supra.*

[4] Boverius, *Annales, anno* 1562. According to Boverius the Cardinal actually was accompanied on his return to France by two Capuchins ; but if so, they must have returned to Italy without making a settlement in France.

[5] For the history of the beginnings of the Capuchin Reform in France, cf. *Chronologie historique des Capucins de la province de Paris*, by Père Philippe de Paris in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, MS. Fr. 25,044 ; *Eloges historiques*

In 1564 there lived in the friary of the Observants in Paris Frère Pierre Deschamps who was reading for the priesthood. He was of Amiens where his father was a merchant, and he had entered the Franciscan Order four years previously when he was but seventeen years of age. During the four years he had spent in the Paris friary he had read with avidity the chronicles of the Order in all that related to the first Franciscan days ; and as with many others, the longing had come to him to live more simply as St. Francis and his first companions had lived. It was the story of Matteo da Bascio repeated—the ardent idealist and the unsympathetic community and a stealthy flight as the only means of gaining freedom. Pierre, however, had not gone far on his way to Spain, whither he was probably drawn by the fame of the Alcantarine reform, when he was arrested by agents of the community and conveyed back to Paris and imprisoned as an apostate in the friary. But after awhile he managed to communicate with a secular friend in the city, and with his aid again escaped one day when the friars were at vespers in the choir. The friend hid him until the hue and cry of his escape had died down ; and this time Pierre was able to reach Spain unhindered. Then followed three years of wandering in Spain and Portugal in search of the life he aspired to. Finally he made his way to Rome, arriving there in May 1567, and presented himself before the Vicar

des Capucins illustres de la province de Paris, by Père Maurice d'Epernay, in same library, MS. Fr. 25,046-47 ; *Abrégé historique des Illustres Religieux Capucins de la Province de Paris*, by the same author, in same library, MS. Fr. 25048 ; *Abrégé des Annales des Capucins de la Province de Paris*, by P. Maurice d'Epernay, in same library, MS. Fr. 5859 ; *Annales des Capucins de Paris*, by Père Maurice d'Epernay, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS. No. 2879.—The most authoritative of these sources is *Chronologie historique* by Philippe de Paris. Maurice d' Epernay, who compiled his works mainly from the *Chronologie* and other lost writings of Philippe de Paris, is not always accurate in his statements.

See the account of the origins of the French Provinces, given in *Les Capucins en Franche-Comté*, op. cit., p. 155, *seq.* cf. P. Rocco da Cesinale : *Storia delle Missioni dei Cappuccini* (Paris, 1867), vol. i, p. 113, *seq.*

The account given by Boverius is curiously inadequate and misleading ; the part played by Pierre Deschamps is hardly recognised. d'Aremberg, too, in his account of the French pioneer (*Flores Seraphici*, II, p. 402) does him less than justice. d'Aremberg, following Boverius, primly remarks : *Quapropter his minime insistendum censeo quae ab anno* 1568, *quo is ab Observantium ordine descivit usque ad annum* 1573 *in quo apud Cappuccinos Romae probationis annum instituit, ab eo gesta sunt, tanquam non legitime ab eo facta* " (p. 403). Had he forgotten the history of the first Capuchins ? The whole history of Capuchin origins is the history of a legitimate and successful rebellion.

General of the Capuchins with the request that he might be received into their congregation and return to establish the Reform in France. The Capuchins sympathised with him, but pleaded that the edict of Paul III prevented them from founding houses outside Italy. They suggested to him to return to France and live the Capuchin life without formal profession until Divine Providence should make the way clear. Pierre acted on the advice. On his way back, he met with a hermit, and they agreed to live together in a strict observance of the Franciscan Rule, and to assume the Capuchin habit.[6] The hermit was henceforth known as Frère Michel. They then came to Paris, and a merchant gave them a small house with an adjoining chapel in the village of Picpus outside the city. Here two priests joined them, Pierre Besson de Dreux who was a few years hence to be martyred for the faith, and Daniel de Chaumont, who for some years past had lived the life of a hermit near Argenteuil. No sooner, however, did the Paris Observants learn that Pierre Deschamps was at Picpus than they had him arrested and imprisoned as an apostate. But now Aymeric de Rochechouart, Bishop of Sisteron, and a prelate with influence at Court, took Pierre and his associates under his protection. Pierre was given up and restored to his small community, and Bishop Aymeric ordained him priest and consecrated the little chapel under the invocation of Saint Mary-of-the-Angels, the name dear to St. Francis. Other associates now joined the original four : not only did they take the Capuchin habit, they also styled themselves Capuchins. But life was not easy ; not only the Observant friars but other mendicant orders also in the neighbourhood, resented the intrusion of another mendicant community ; and especially of an upstart community which, properly speaking, had no legal existence either in the Church or in the State. On the other hand the people were much drawn to these " Capuchins " because of their simple piety and austere life ; and this did not soothe the irritated feelings of the other mendicant communities who became more

[6] According to *Abrégé historique des Capucins illustres*, MS. cit., fol. 30, Pierre had received permission from the Capuchin Procurator to assume the habit ; Mattia da Salò in *Historia Cappuccina*, MS. cit., II, p. 137, on the contrary, declares that no such permission was granted.

clamorous against the new-comers the more the popular favour went out to them. It became evident to friends of these " Capuchins " that the new community must be regularised, and in 1572 Bishop Aymeric interested the king on their behalf and letters patent were issued declaring the royal will that the " Capuchins " of Picpus be maintained and conserved in all the rights and prerogatives of their Order and observance approved in Rome, with the same right to quest for alms as other mendicant Orders, and to celebrate mass and recite the Divine Office in their chapel ; and the Observant friars and other mendicant religious were warned to take note of this declaration and to cease molesting the said "Capuchins."[7]

Still the fact remained that the Picpus " Capuchins " were not of the Order approved at Rome, whatever the royal letters might say.

Once again, therefore, Pierre Deschamps set out for Rome; but on this occasion he went armed with letters from the king and the Cardinal of Lorraine. He so far succeeded that the Vicar General of the congregation consented to send back with him two Italian Capuchins to investigate the situation. The Italian Capuchins were Fra Dionigi da Milano and Fra Remigio da Lodi ; and it was taken as a good omen by the friends of Pierre that the two Italians bore names dear to the French nation.

Meanwhile, during Pierre's absence in Rome, the small community at Picpus gained favour in another high quarter. The queen-mother, Catherine de Medicis, was out driving one day when she came to the small chapel of the friars at Picpus. The simplicity and poverty of the place and of the friars attracted her. She had known and reverenced Capuchins in Italy, and she immediately determined to adopt the " Capuchins " of Picpus and to establish them in a house in the suburb Saint-Honoré.

The Italian friars on their arrival at Paris took up their abode with Pierre Deschamps at Picpus. They were received by the king and the queen-mother ; and by none were they more cordially welcomed than by the Cardinal of

[7] See letters of Charles IX of April 16 and August 20, 1572, in *Chronologie Historique*, MS. cit., fol. 4, *seq.* cf. l'Abbé J. Morey, op. cit., p. 162, *seq.* and p. 170, *seq.*

Lorraine. But now a difficulty arose which for awhile brought negotiations to an end. The Picpus " Capuchins " enjoyed a small revenue from some land given them by Bishop Aymeric. The Italians declared that it was against the Rule of St. Francis, as they observed it, to hold any revenues however small ; but Pierre Deschamps, strangely enough, refused to renounce the bishop's gift ; and not until the Italians had left Picpus and accepted the hospitality of the Jesuits in Paris did Pierre give way. The incident is not without significance ; to the Italians the freedom and simplicity of their life meant everything : Pierre Deschamps probably had been more attracted by the note of penitential austerity.

Eventually matters were arranged to the satisfaction of the Italian envoys, and once again, in the spring of 1573, Pierre Deschamps crossed the Alps, accompanied by Frère Michel and bearing letters from the king and the queen-mother, and from the Cardinal of Lorraine. The French Ambassador at the Roman Court was also instructed to negotiate with the Pope for the abrogation of the edict of Paul III. At the feast of Pentecost Frère Pierre arrived at Ancona, where the General Chapter of the Capuchins was being held. The Chapter decided with the Pope's approbation to send friars to France and to take over the Picpus community.[8] Pierre Deschamps and Frère Michel were to go to Rome to undergo a year's probation in accordance with the constitutions of the Order ; and meanwhile the Holy See would be petitioned formally to declare the Capuchins free to make settlements outside Italy. Partly perhaps owing to the death of the Vicar General, Vicenzo da Mont'-Ulmo, it was not until the summer of 1574 that Pierre Deschamps' vision was realised. On May 6 of that year Gregory XIII published a brief, formally abrogating the prohibitory edict of Paul III, and permitting the Capuchins " to go forth freely to all parts of the earth, and there found houses and provinces."[9] Without further delay

[8] The decision was communicated to the Cardinal of Lorraine in a letter received by him on July 17, 1573. He replied the following day, expressing his gratification at the news and asking that the friars should arrive in September. See the Cardinal's letter in *Bullar. Ord. Cap.* V, p. 23.

[9] cf. Brief of Gregory XIII, *Ex nostri pastoralis officii*, of May 6, 1574. Boverius, *Annales*, *anno* 1575, III, where the date is incorrectly given as 1575.

a small band of Capuchins, ten in number, under the leadership of Fra Pacifico da San Gervasio, set forth for Paris.

That decision to cross the Alps was of tremendous vital importance in the history of the Capuchins ; within half a century it was to bring them into intimate association with the great world-struggle in which the modern world was born, in almost every country of Christendom, and to send them forth as missionaries into the wilds of North and South America, into Central Africa and to little known kingdoms of Western Asia. And with this far-flung freedom of territorial expansion and contact with many peoples was to come a broader mental and social outlook and the inevitable developments which result from it.

(ii)

Paris had once again called to Assisi ; but it was not to be in the university that these younger sons of St. Francis were to win their laurels, but in the larger school of a nation's life where the problems are immediate and actual, written in blood and the soul's pain. And in that school for nigh upon a century the Capuchins were to play no mean part.

Pacifico da San Gervasio, the superior of the expedition, was an experienced leader. He had been already Provincial of the province of Milan, Commissary General in Crete and Apulia. He was a man of practical sagacity but great simplicity, one who believed rather in the efficacy of prayer than of arguments when dealing with heretics and other rebellious folk.[10]

In the *Bullarium Ord. Cap.* (I, p. 35 and V, p. 2) the date is given as 1574. Both Boverius and the Bullarium, however, give the year of Gregory's pontificate as "anno quarto." But Gregory XIII was elected on May 13, 1572, and the date consequently should read "anno secundo." The date is correctly given in *Chronologie Historique* MS. cit., fol. 15.

The brief of Pope Gregory XIII notes the fact that the decree of Paul III, forbidding the Capuchins to take places beyond the Alps, was already held to be abrogated. Paul III had issued the prohibition on the supposition that the position of the Capuchins in their relation to the Observants would be discussed at the next General Chapter of the Observants. The subject, however, was not brought up at the Chapter. Nevertheless, as the brief remarks, the Capuchins had refrained from taking houses outside Italy out of reverence for the authority of the Holy See.

[10] cf. Boverius, *Annales, anno* 1575 ; *Bullar. Ord. Cap.* V, p. 25 ; d'Aremberg, op. cit., I, p. 72 ; *I Cappuccini nelle Puglie*, op. cit., p. 75 ; Valdimiro da Ber-

At Lyons, where the friars rested for awhile, the magistrates and some of the leading citizens besought Pacifico to send back to them from Paris some friars to found a house in their city. At Orleans, Pacifico had a friendly encounter with a Calvinist and won him back to the Catholic Faith ; it was the opening of the great missionary effort the Capuchins were to make in France against the Huguenots.

The first public appearance of the Capuchins in Paris was at the funeral of Charles IX, at whose invitation they had come.[11] Catherine de Medicis, now queen-regent pending the arrival of Henry III from Poland, welcomed them warmly, and shortly afterwards gave them the house in the suburb Saint-Honoré. Then the Cardinal of Lorraine claimed a detachment and housed them at Meudon near his own residence. The Picpus house was abandoned because of the continued hostility of the other mendicant houses ; perhaps, too, because of the difficulty over the land given by Bishop Aymeric. In the spring of the following year, some friars were sent with the licence of the queen-regent to make the promised settlement in Lyons.[12] But before that settlement was made, Fra Pacifico, the leader of the expedition, was dead. Such was the reverence in which he was held, that for two days his body must lie in state to satisfy the devotion of the people before they would allow his burial in the church of Saint-Germain-les-Auxerrois. To take his place, Fra Mattia Bellintani da Salo, Definitor General of the Order, was now sent as Commissary to France.

No happier choice of a leader at this moment could have been made. Mattia was the younger brother of that Fra Paolo da Salò whom we met in plague-stricken Milan ; and he was a man to confer distinction upon any enterprise with which he was associated, a man of many parts, as brilliant with his pen as he was eloquent in his speech ; and withal a tireless worker.[13] Born in 1534, he had been re-

gamo : *I Conventi e I Cappuccini dell' antico Ducato di Milano.* P. Rocco da Cesinale, op. cit., I, p. 119.

[11] Charles IX died on May 31, 1573.

[12] *Bullar. Ord. Cap.* V, p. 115.

[13] *Anal. Ord. Cap.*, p. 104. Concerning Mattia da Salo, *vide* Boverius, *Annales, anno* 1611 ; Fred. Oderici, *I Due Bellintani*, op. cit. ; Valdimiro da Bergamo : *I Conventi ed I Cappuccini Bresciani*, op. cit., p. 212, *seq.* ; also *Biografia e Bibligrafia del P. Mattia da Salo*, in *Miscellanea Franciscana, anno* III, fasc. I (Foligno, 1888), p. 22, *seq.*, and fasc. II, p. 39 ; P. Gianantonio M. da Brescia : *Vita del P. Mattia Bellintani da Salo* (Milano, 1885).

ceived into the Capuchin Order by that Fra Pacifico da San Gervasio whom he now succeeded in France. Mattia was then eighteen years of age. As a student he was avid of knowledge. He was introduced to the works of St. Bonaventura by Fra Girolamo da Pistoia—he who loved the Holy Family ; and continued his studies under the learned Scotist, Fra Girolamo da Montefiore, the Vicar General who now despatched him to France. The study of the Scriptures fascinated Mattia, and for their reading he mastered the Greek and Hebrew languages. But study in a Capuchin friary had its difficulties ; and we read of Mattia studying the epistles of St. Paul at night by the light of the sanctuary lamp in the church of the friary because the friary was too poor to afford him other lighting. His persistence was characteristic both of his piety and determination. At twenty-seven he was licensed to preach and at the same time was appointed to lecture in theology. Thus began his active career. His first sermons were preached during the Lent of 1561 in the cathedral of Foligno, and he at once made his mark. An impassioned preacher, he was yet thoughtful and persuasive, robust and gentle ; and he had a happy gift of weaving his thoughts in the woof of Scriptural language. It was said of him, " that he combined the penetration of the eagle with the sweetness of the swan ; that in him was to be found the love of the beloved disciple, the wisdom of St. Paul and the zealous activity of St. Peter."[14] The Petrine quality in his character became evident during his first Lenten course. He was not content to preach ; he formed an association of "practical Christians" who undertook to live according to the teaching of Christ. And yet in his first years as a preacher he was shy and diffident, at least out of the pulpit. In 1564 when he was preaching at Spoleto, he was asked to address a massed gathering of the citizens with a view to bringing about a cessation of faction warfare. Mattia when he faced the crowd was dumb-stricken and " knew not what to say." A man in the crowd thereupon came forward and pleaded for peace, whilst Mattia stood beside him a humble listener. But the year following, at Narni, finding himself in a similar position, he forced himself to

[14] See the preface to his posthumous work : *Quadragesimale Ambrosianum duplex. Accomodantur conciones ad usum Romanum*, t. II (Lugduni, 1624).

speak and spoke with effect. Four years later at Cava in the kingdom of Naples, the inspiration came to him to promote the Forty Hours adoration as it had been preached by Fra Giuseppe da Ferno and from that time he propagated the devotion so zealously as to be considered its second founder.[15] Commonly when he preached a Lenten course, he left behind him some practical memorial of his labours. As at Foligno he instituted the association of "practical Christians," so at Nola he founded a " compagnia della misericordia " ; at Pavia he introduced a truce of God amongst the faction-loving students of the University ; at Brescia he established the practice of evening mental prayer. He was at the same time a copious and brilliant writer, whose works compelled thought whilst attracting by the freshness of their style ; a man too of affairs constantly employed in administrative offices of the Order and called upon by bishops to handle difficult situations. Such was Mattia da Salo. San Carlo Borromeo admired and loved him as his " true apostle."[16] San Felice da Cantalice loved him too. When Felice lay dying, Mattia hurried to the bedside of the saint. " Dost thou know me ?" Mattia anxiously enquired. Felice replied: " I know thee well, O flowering May—O maggio fiorito."[17]

Mattia was in France early in 1576. On his way he had tarried awhile in Savoy and had induced the Duke, Emmanuele Filiberto, to allow the Capuchins to settle in Chambéry,[18] notwithstanding the opposition of the Calvinists: he thus took possession of a field of labour in which the Capuchins were to win for themselves an imperishable name in the religious history of that country.

From Savoy Mattia went on to Lyons, where he met the energetic Fra Girolamo da Milano, and arranged at the request of the Bishop of Avignon to send friars to his city. A few years later, as we shall see, Avignon was to become the centre of a separate Capuchin province. At Paris, letters given him by San Carlo Borromeo to the king and the Papal

[15] Boverius, *Annales*, *anno* 1611. Amongst Mattia's works is a treatise on the devotion: *Trattato dell' origine delle Quarant'ore e alcuni pii esercizii di dolori di Gesu Cristo* (Venezia, 1586).

[16] See San Carlo's letters on the occasion of Mattia's going to France, in A Sala : *San Carlo Borromeo Documenti*, II, p. 423, *seq.*

[17] Giannantonio M. da Brescia, op. cit., p. 79.

[18] cf. *Bullar. Ord. Cap.* V, p. 132.

nuncio, secured their goodwill which quickly ripened into friendship. In July, Henry III confirmed the acts of his predecessor and the queen-mother which allowed the Capuchins to settle in France and gave them the franchise of the kingdom.[19] No detailed account of Mattia's administration has come down to us, but sufficient is known to reveal his superb energy. By 1578 such progress had been made as to lead to the establishment of two provinces in France, with their respective centres at Paris and Lyons.[20] In addition to the four settlements at Paris, Meudon, Lyons and Avignon there were friaries at Roanne, Orléans, Caen and Marseilles.[21] In 1577, Mattia obtained from Pope Gregory XIII a brief empowering him to establish confraternities of the Blessed Sacrament throughout France, Savoy and Flanders and in the Papal dominion of Avignon.[22] Devotion to the Eucharistic Presence was to be the chief means employed by the Capuchins in France as elsewhere to strengthen the faith of Catholics in the presence of heresy. Yet more significant was Mattia's petition to the Pope to grant him faculties to absolve priests who had obtained their benefices by simony. The explanation is given in a letter Mattia wrote to San Carlo Borromeo: "I believe Your Lordship knows, or will know, how the vice of simony works for evil in poor France ; nor is it wonderful if the wrath of God is enkindled against her, and that by the hands of the Huguenots the clergy are deprived of that which they unjustly possess or use so evilly... Having preached the Lent in Avignon I have secretly gathered certain priests into a confraternity to help them live and conduct themselves as good priests." Mattia goes on to say that he proposes to ask the Pope for faculties to absolve simoniacs and to allow them to retain their benefices on condition that they lead good lives. It is useless, he says, to expect them to resign their benefices, since they have no other means of subsistence.

[19] *ibid.*, p. 2.

[20] *Anal. Ord. Cap.* V, p. 104.

[21] *Bullar. Ord. Cap.*, pp. 64, 90, 102. The friary of Roanne is not mentioned in the *Bullarium*. But cf. *Les Capucins en Franche-Comté*, op. cit., p. 181 ; and P. Apollinaire de Valence : *Toulouse Chretienne : Histoire des Capucins* (Toulouse, 1897), vol. i, p. 5, note 1. The friary of Roanne was founded in 1577 by Pierre Deschamps.

[22] *Bullar. Ord. Cap.* V, p. 3.

The reforms of the Council of Trent must be introduced, but step by step.[23]

Thus at a bound did Mattia da Salo commit the Capuchins in France to the apostolate they were to carry on with conspicuous valour during the next century, the revival of the people's faith and the purification of the clerical and religious state.

Mattia returned to Italy in 1578. We shall meet with him again many times in the course of this story, for his work in France was but an incident in a long life filled with varied activities.

Fra Anselmo da Pietra-Molaria—he who had distinguished himself at the battle of Lepanto—succeeded Mattia da Salo as Commissary of the province of Paris, whilst Fra Girolamo da Milano succeeded as Commissary of the province of Lyons.[24] But in 1580 provincial chapters were held and these two provinces were then fully constituted, with Ministers Provincial of their own choosing.

The two provinces grew with amazing vitality. Within another ten years the province of Paris numbered eight friaries whilst that of Lyons had increased to fourteen houses including two in Savoy.[25]

In the meantime the Paris province had sent friars to Belgium where a settlement was made in Antwerp in 1585 and in Brussels in 1587. In Belgium they were cordially received by the Observant friars and a number of these with the permission of their superiors at once passed over to the Capuchin congregation ; but within a year so many were those who passed over and those who wished to pass over, that a decree was obtained from the Pope forbidding any further migration.[26]

Alessandro Farnese, the governor-general, welcomed them

[23] Letter of April 17, 1577, in Giannantonio M. da Bergamo, op. cit., p. 72.

[24] *Anal. Ord. Cap.* V, p. 104.

[25] The Paris houses were : Paris (1574), Meudon (1574), Caen (1577), Orléans (1578), Etampes (1581), Chartres (1584), Bourges (1588), Blois (1588). Those of Lyons were : Lyons (1575), Chambéry (1576), Avignon (1576), Marseilles (1576, 1579), Roanne (1577), S. Jean de Maurienne (1580), Salins (1582), Arles (1584), Aix (1585), Montmeillant (1586), Salon (1587), Dole (1587), Gray (1588), Toulon (1588). cf. *Bullar. Ord. Cap.* V, *Tabular Topographicae*, p. 389, *seq.* The *tabula* for the Paris province gives Rheims as founded in 1574 ; but I have found no confirmation of this.

[26] See the letters of Sixtus V and of Cardinals Sanseverina and Montalto in Boverius, *Annales*, *anno* 1586, 2 *seq.*

as he had already welcomed the Jesuits and showed them every favour. At his request, Sixtus V in 1586 ordained that Belgium should be a province distinct from Paris ; and the following year the General Chapter of the Order appointed Frat' Ippolito da Bergamo to govern the new province in the capacity of Commissary General. Frat' Ippolito was a Capuchin in whom the original simplicity of the congregation was veritably incarnated in its austerest form. He would allow only small friaries and churches of the severest simplicity ; under his rule the friars fasted almost continuously, though, says the chronicler, " by nature but not by fault the Belgians were great eaters." He rigidly inculcated that the brethren should seek knowledge in prayer rather than in books. To the preachers he allowed only the Bible and one or two commentaries ; to the clerics, the *Imitation of Christ* and Herpf's *Speculum Perfectionis*.[27] He impressed a character on the Belgian Capuchins which endured.

The same year that the Capuchins entered Belgium, a company of them under the leadership of Fra Benedetto da Cremona, were sent to Lorraine at the request of Henri of Lorraine, Bishop of Verdun, and other princes of the ducal house. If the favour of princes is a dangerous gift to religious men, the Capuchins of Lorraine were encompassed with temptation. Marguerite of Savoy, widow of Antoine de Luxembourg, and Marguerite Madeleine de Clermont, wife of the Marshal Montmorency, built them a friary at Liney, the Bishop of Verdun established them in his episcopal city. Catherine, Duchesse d'Aumale, gave them a house in S. Michel; and that was but the beginning of favours. The Capuchin churches became the chosen burial places for the members of the ducal house. Henri, Bishop of Verdun, having invited the Capuchins to Lorraine, would himself have resigned his See to have become one of them ; but as he was not allowed to do this, he commonly wore the Capuchin habit and lived as nearly as he might as a Capuchin friar, and at the end was buried as a friar in a friar's grave. His nephew, Henri, Comte de Chaligny, followed his example and thus set a fashion which long continued not only in Lorraine but

[27] Boverius, *anno* 1587, 12-14. Herpf (Harphius), a Franciscan Observant. As an authority on the interior life he ranked high amongst spiritual writers in the sixteenth century.

elsewhere in France amongst the more devout Catholics.[28] In the stormy days when Henry of Navarre was fighting for the crown of France, Lorraine became a refuge for many Capuchins of the Paris province who sought a more peaceful atmosphere.

Meanwhile in 1587, a new province had been carved out of that of Lyons—the province of St. Louis as it was officially styled, including Avignon and Provence.[29]

Yet that was not all. Quite independently of Paris and Lyons, a new province had been founded in Languedoc, one that was to contribute a chapter of picturesque adventure to Capuchin history, as we shall see.

The coming of the Capuchins to Languedoc happened in this wise.[30] At the General Chapter of the Order held in Rome in May 1581, a messenger appeared from the parliament of Toulouse and presented a letter which requested that Capuchins should be sent to that city. The petition was earnestly supported by Paul de Foix, Archbishop of Toulouse and at that time ambassador of the King of France at the Papal Court. Whereupon the newly-elected Vicar General of the Order, Gianmaria da Tusa, commissioned Fra Tommaso da Torino, guardian of the friary at Lyons, to proceed to Toulouse to report upon the situation. Fra Tommaso was cordially received by the premier president, Duranti, and other members of the parliament, and so satisfactory was his report that the following year a band of Capuchins, nineteen in number, was sent from Rome, and FraGasparro da Pavia, at the time guardian of the friary of Roanne,[31] was appointed

[28] cf. *Bullar. Ord. Cap.* V, p. 195. Boverius, *anno* 1585, 7.

[29] *Bullar. Ord. Cap.* V, p. 107. Boverius, *anno* 1587, 3.

[30] The principal sources for the early history of the Capuchins in Languedoc are : *Recueil chronologique des choses qui concernment la fondation et le progrès de la province des Capucins d'Aquitaine ou de Tolose . . . fait par le commandement du R. P. Emmanuel de Besiers*. MS. in Archives de la Haute-Garonne, serie H, fonds des Capucins, No. 7 in folio and *Memorabilia praecipua provinciae Aquitaniae sive Tolosae fratrum ordinis sancti Francisci Capucinorum piae posteritati dicata*, *ibid.* No. 1. Another independent manuscript, but with the same title. *Memorabilia*, etc., exists in the municipal archives of Bordeaux. I have not had an opportunity to consult the manuscript sources. For my account of the Capuchins in Languedoc I have relied mainly upon the scholarly research work published by P. Apollinaire de Valence in *Toulouse Chretienne : Histoire des Capucins*, op. cit. ; and in his : *Capucins et Huguenots dans le Languedoc sous Henri IV, Louis XIII, et Louis XIV*, in *Revue du Midi*, November 1894.

[31] By a confusion of names Gasparro is usually described by the chroniclers of the Order as having been guardian of the friary of Rome.

Commissary. On their arrival President Duranti and the members of the parliament gave the friars a public welcome, and installed them in the College de Verdalle outside the City.[32] The college was spacious, too spacious thought Fra Gasparro, for poor Capuchins, and he only consented to accept it on condition that the roof should be lowered and the building altered to symbolise the poverty and austerity which the friars professed. When some expostulated with him, he replied that the people of Languedoc delighted in lordly mansions ; all the more reason that the friars should be safeguarded against the temptation to follow their example. In fact it was this love of poverty which won the respect of the light-hearted people of Languedoc, that and the friars' simplicity. With awe the people listened to the grave chant of the Divine Office in the friars' chapel, so unlike the lighter chants to which they were accustomed ; they wondered when they saw the altar decorated with fresh flowers instead of the rich ornaments they saw elsewhere.[33] Everything went well for awhile ; then came trouble. A number of Observant friars straightway joined the Capuchins ; their superiors protested and Duranti, the premier president, took up their cause. He demanded an undertaking from Fra Gasparro that no Observant should be received by the Capuchins. Gasparro replied that it was a question of Canon Law with which the civil power had no authority to meddle. Thereupon Duranti threatened to compel the Capuchins to obey his orders. The crisis was growing acute when the Duc de Montmorency, the leader of the Politique party in the war between the Catholic Ligue and the Huguenots, established the Capuchins in Béziers and Agde which were outside the jurisdiction of the parliament of Toulouse. Gasparro went to Béziers to conduct the business of these foundations. This added fuel to the fire as between himself and president Duranti to whom Montmorency was little better, if indeed better at all, than a Huguenot. Gasparro was now accused of being an ally of the hated 'Politiques' as against the Catholic 'Ligue.' Agents

[32] The College as an educational establishment had been closed some years previously. It had then been occupied for a few years by the Order of Minims, but these too had abandoned it.

[33] P. Apollinaire de Valence, op. cit., p. 7.

were sent to the friary in Toulouse to search for incriminating documents. The documents did not exist, which only made the matter more suspicious. The people of Toulouse, even more ardent Ligueurs than the parliament itself, nevertheless stood by the Capuchins : but for their devotion the friars undoubtedly would have been driven out of the territories of Toulouse. Meanwhile Gasparro prudently remained at Béziers awaiting instructions from Rome. The instructions came in the form of a fresh contingent of Capuchins and a diplomatic letter which he was to deliver to President Duranti. Thereupon a fourth friary was founded at Albi. But Duranti was not the man easily to brook opposition, and the personal relations between himself and Fra Gasparro continued strained. So at the General Chapter of the Order held in Rome in 1587 Gasparro begged to be relieved of the office of Commissary, and Fra Girolamo da Castel-Ferretti was sent to Languedoc in his stead. It was thus that the Capuchins against their will became involved in the affairs of the Ligue with which later on they became more involved, less unwillingly. Under Girolamo da Castel-Ferretti the good relations between the parliament and the Capuchins were restored, owing in part to the services rendered by the friars in attending the sick during the pestilence of 1587. By the end of the century there were fourteen friaries in Languedoc and not less than fifty-two in France. Half a century later in 1650, the Capuchins in France were divided into ten provinces, in which were two hundred and eighty-seven friaries, and five thousand three hundred and sixty-three friars, about one fourth of the entire strength of the Capuchin congregation at that period.[34]

But this amazingly rapid increase in the number of the friars in France was less amazing than the energetic activities by which they won the position of influence they came to occupy, and the deep spirituality which after all was at the root of their success. But of this we must tell the story in

[34] Holzapfel : *Manuale Historiae Ord. Frat. Minorum* (Friburgi Brisgoviae, 1909), pp. 559-560. This number does not include the province of Savoy where in 1650 there were twenty friaries and two hundred and seventy-one friars. The *Bullarium Ord. Cap.* V, *Tabulae Tipograph*, p. 389, *seq.*, gives a larger number of foundations before 1650 ; but its dates are not always correct. The French provinces were those of Paris, Lyons, St. Louis, Aquitaine, Toulouse, Tours, Normandy, Brittany, Burgundy, Lorraine.

another chapter. For the moment we will follow the invasions by the friars of other lands which took place simultaneously with the beginnings of their settlement in France.

(iii)

Next after France came Spain. In 1576 the magistrates of Barcelona despatched a letter to the Vicar General requesting that Capuchins should be sent to that city. The letter ran quaintly : " Most Reverend Father in Christ. Miguel Quirola a pharmacist of this our city has recounted to Us many things concerning the glory and holiness of your Order ; also We have heard both by word of mouth and by letters, how greatly amongst you flourishes austerity of life and regular observance, for which reason the religious of your Order are everywhere spreading abroad amongst the people and, by their manifest goodness of life and their preaching of the divine word, confer the greatest benefits on the Christian people. Wherefore this our city also greatly desires that a monastery of your Order should be built within our city's walls, although by God's grace it abounds in monasteries of religious Orders in which are men illustrious for the life and doctrine they set before us." With this exordium the magistrates offered to give over to the Capuchins a house and church dedicated to Santa Madrona, abutting the city walls ; and declared that should the friars be sent, nothing will be wanting on the part of the city to bring the business to a felicitous end. The Vicar General, says the chronicler, perceived even from the style of the letter the very real piety of the magistrates " and without delay selected Fray Arcangelo d'Alarcon of the Province of Naples to be Commissary General, and sent him with five companions to Barcelona."[35] As a matter of fact, however, Fray Arcangelo was not sent until the next General Chapter in 1578.[36] Fray Arcangelo was himself a Spaniard of a noble family in Tarragona ; he was one of three brothers who became Capuchins,[37] of whom Fray Juan in 1596 was

[35] *Bullar. Ord. Cap.* V, pp. 306-307.
[36] *Anal. Ord. Cap.* V, p. 105. cf. *Bullar. Ord. Cap.*, p. 307, *ad finem.*
[37] Boverius, *Annales*, *anno* 1598 ; d'Aremberg, op. cit. II, p. 100.

commissioned to establish the Order in Valentia. Both brothers had already done good work in the kingdom of Naples.

Fray Arcangelo and his companions arrived at Barcelona in the summer of 1578 [38] and their first act was to make a pilgrimage to the ancient shrine of Montserrat where they commended their future in Spain to the protection of the Blessed Virgin. Their first dwelling was the dilapidated convent of Santa Madrona, but so unhealthy was it that they all fell sick. The magistrates then gave them the small church of Santa Eulalia in a retired spot outside the city ; but having brought the friars from Italy the people of Barcelona were not content they should dwell at a distance, but would have them in the city where they might be seen and be of service ; so the friars were shortly established in a house by the city walls, known as Montecalvario. Novices came immediately, many of them from the noblest houses of Spain.[39] And they were shortly joined by a number of Observant friars, amongst them Fray Jose of the noble family of the Roccaberti, and his Father Guardian, Fray Antonio. But the Capuchin life proved too hard for Fray Antonio and he returned to the Observants. Afterwards when anyone mentioned the Capuchins in his hearing, Fray Antonio would tell them : " To be a Capuchin one must be an angel or a man of stone." Fray Jose was of the angelic sort.[40] Distinguished both by birth and learning, he was the humblest of men. An admirer once asked how many years he had been a religious. Jose replied : " The years in religion don't count : what counts is the virtue one has acquired in the years ; and I have acquired none." That was his sincere belief. His self-abasement was such that he thought himself honoured if the humblest lay brother spoke to him. His life was a life of prayer. He was fifty years of age when he joined the Capuchins ; he died at fifty-six with the reputation of a saint.

Throughout Catalonia and the district of Rousillon to the north, the Capuchins were readily welcomed and within twelve years they founded no less than sixteen friaries. Before

[38] Boverius, *Annales*, 1578, III, *seq.*
[39] cf. *Bullar. Ord. Cap.* V, p. 308, where a list of these families is given.
[40] Boverius, *Annales*, *anno* 1584, 12 *b*, *seq.*

the end of the century a new province had arisen in Valentia, and a beginning was made in Aragon.[41]

But outside Catalonia they encountered difficulties. Shortly after Fray Arcangelo had come to Barcelona, another small colony of Capuchins under Arcangelo's brother, Fray Juan, were brought to Spain by the Marchese S. Croce, a captain in the Neapolitan Navy, who wished to take them with him to his native Castile. But the Castilians would not admit them ;[42] and for some years national pride set up a barrier against Capuchin settlements in Castile and elsewhere. Spain, it was argued, had already an abundance of religious orders, and there was the Spanish Franciscan Reform of the Discalceati or Alcantarines. What need then of a foreign importation ?[43] Nevertheless by 1650 there were five Capuchin provinces in Spain and over one thousand seven hundred friars.[44]

In Spain the Capuchins found themselves amongst an entirely Catholic people—a unique experience in their short history, for even in Italy they had had to face a widespread menace of Protestantism.

In Switzerland where they made their next appearance, in 1581, they were at once thrown into the very vortex of the Protestant struggle with Catholicism.

Some years before this the Capuchins, at the call of the border-bishops, had thrown out missionary outposts into that no-man's-land, as the Great Powers seemed to regard it, the Valtellina.[45] As far back as 1550 Capuchins had penetrated into the uplands of Rhaetia only to be driven back by the outcry of the Protestant ministers. Again they went at

[41] The first houses in Spain, according to the Bullarium, were Barcelona (1578), Gerona (1581), S. Celonio, Solfina, Villa franca del Parnades, Manresa (1582), Blanes (1583), Figuères (1584), Tarragona (1589), Valentia (1596), Saragossa (1598). To these must be added Perpignan (1580), Ceret (1581-(1582), Prada (1586), Vinca (1589). These four friaries were incorporated into the province of Languedoc in 1663. cf. *Gotholonenis Fundatio Provinciae* in *Anal. Ord. Cap.* V, p. 351, *seq.*, where a different order of foundations is given.

[42] Boverius, *Annales, anno* 1578, IX.

[43] See the petition to Philip IV on behalf of the Capuchins signed by Doctor Blasius Gundisalvus a Ribero (circa 1640). A copy is in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Arch. Seld. A. subst. 9 (15).

[44] Holzapfel, *op. cit.*, p. 559. The five provinces were Catalonia, Valentia, Aragon, Boetica (Andalusia) and Castile.

[45] cf. P. Rocco da Cesinale : *Storia delle Missioni dei Cappuccini*, I, p. 97, *seq.*

the appeal of San Carlo Borromeo and again were expelled by the law which forbade foreign priests to minister in the country. In the Valtellina the majority of the people still clung to the Catholic Faith, whilst in the Grisons the Protestants were in the ascendant and it was they who dominated the petty mountain states who formed the Ligue. At length San Carlo appealed to the Capuchins to send Padre Francesco da Bormio,[46] a native of the Valtellina, to the succour of the stricken Catholics. Francesco da Bormio was a man after San Carlo's own heart; austere with himself, ever ready to be of service to others. In his youth he had studied in Germany with the intention of serving his native land in some official capacity: he understood his people and their determined hostility to foreign rule. But he had abandoned a secular career and become a Capuchin. He was Provincial in Milan at the time of the great plague and had stood by San Carlo in his heroic efforts to save the people. Before that he had gained repute as a preacher in Lombardy. Yet he was the humblest of men as well as one of the kindest. It is related how when he was Provincial, he once visited a small friary where there was no spare room to lodge in—the friary was mainly a wattle hut. Francesco would not allow that any brother should vacate his own room to him, but himself slept in an empty wine-vat in a neighbouring vineyard. Even when preaching a mission he would spend several hours of the day in prayer, and never relaxed his fasts. That was the man San Carlo now chose to undertake a new mission in the Valtellina. The mission was short-lived. Francesco worked heroically; he not only put new heart into the despondent Catholics but he won several Protestants back to the Church: and that made him a marked man with the Calvinist ministers, and for a time he went in danger of his life. Eventually he was waylaid and captured and cast into gaol on the plea that he was an emissary of the hated Spaniards. He proved his innocence on that charge, but though his life was spared he was expelled the country.

At that time San Carlo's eyes were turned towards the unhappy condition of the Catholics in Switzerland. Of all

[46] Concerning Francesco da Bormio cf. Boverius, *Annales*, *anno* 1583; d'Aremberg: *Flores Seraphici*, II, p. 75, *seq.* P. Valdimiro da Bergamo: *I conventi e Cappuccini dell' antico Ducato di Milano* (Crema, 1893).

the cantons five only stood firm for Catholicism ; and the marvel was that these had so far remained loyal. It was not the zeal of the clergy that kept them loyal. To remedy the evil, San Carlo had established a college in Milan under the direction of the Jesuits for the education and spiritual training of a new body of clergy to minister to the Swiss Catholics. But the danger demanded more heroic measures. In 1574 the Jesuits had established themselves in Luzern and opened a college there ; San Filippo at San Carlo's appeal had sent some of his Oratorian priests to serve the people in their spiritual needs, and now San Carlo turned to the Capuchins. So it came about that at the General Chapter of 1581 Francesco da Bormio with five companions was commissioned to cross the Alps into Switzerland and establish the Order there.[47] The six friars arrived at Altdorf under the great St. Gothard on the eve of the feast of our Lady's Nativity and were received by Colonel Walter von Roll who had been the orator of the Catholic Cantons at the Council of Trent. Francesco da Bormio when first his eyes rested on the town snugly clinging to the mountain-side, was moved almost to tears. " Here will be my rest for ever !" he exclaimed. Some there were in the town, especially among the clergy, who resented the coming of the Capuchins, Catholics though they called themselves, and ready as they were to fight for the name against their Protestant neighbours, they had no wish to be disturbed in their easy-going conscience. Yet in a short while Francesco da Bormio won their respect by his persuasive eloquence ; and when Walter von Roll set about building the friary, the foundation stone was willingly laid by the dean of the clergy, Heinrich Heil, he who had once unblushingly presented his illegitimate children to receive the blessing of San Carlo when the Saint was visiting Switzerland as Apostolic Legate. The following year the Capuchins were invited to establish a friary at Stans on the border of the lake ; but again a party of the Catholics received them with resentful scorn, and because of their coarse habit treated them as mummers ; and here too, some of the

[47] *Anal. Ord. Cap.* V, p. 105. Concerning the history of the Swiss province cf. *Chronica Provinciae Helveticae Ord. S. P. Francisci Capucinorum ex annalibus ejusdem provinciae manuscriptis excerpta.* (Solodori, 1884) ; P. Anastasius Burgler ; *Die Franziskus-orden in der Schweiz* (Schwyz, 1926) ; Boverius, *Annales, anno* 1581 ; *Bullar. Ord. Cap.* IV, p. 1, *seq.* ; P. Rocco da Cesinale, op. cit., I, p. 12, *seq.*

clergy were hostile to their coming. Fra Francesco da Lugano eventually won them over by his burning eloquence, and once again the deserted churches were filled with devout congregations. A third foundation was made the following year in Luzern where the family of Pfyffer, who had already built a college for the Jesuits in the city, now gave the Capuchins an ancient sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin which stood on their upland estate, the Wesemlin, overlooking the city ; and here the friary was built. Those three friaries, with others shortly to be founded, still remain to-day, witnesses of the fast affection which soon was to bind the Catholic Cantons to the Capuchins.

But before the settlement was made in Luzern, the heroic Francesco da Bormio was dead. Early in the year he was preaching in Luzern when news came to him that one of his first companions in this Swiss adventure, Frater Sebastianus, a young Swiss cleric, lay dying at Altdorf. Francesco hurried back and was in time to comfort the last hours of the youthful friar. It was Francesco's last journey. After the burial of Frater Sebastianus he himself fell sick : he died on April 23 as they were reading to him the Gospel of our Lord's Passion. He had found his " rest for ever " at Altdorf. San Carlo was much moved when he heard of Francesco's death, " A great man has been taken from us," he exclaimed, " a great servant of God has left behind him a Church which suffers a grave loss by his death." Francesco da Bormio was one of those pioneers who are great in the idealism and energy they impart to others. In a short eighteen months he laid the foundations of a province which for four centuries has maintained itself in the purpose which drew him across the Alps, and which, notwithstanding the vicissitudes of religious or irreligious passion through which the country has passed, has been kept fast to the soil by the grateful reverence of a people. Before his death the first small band of Capuchins had been swelled by a further contingent from Italy and still more by the entrance of novices. In seven years seven friaries were established ;[48] by 1650 they had

[48] cf. *Chronica Capp. Prov. Helvet*, pp. 6-26. Besides those mentioned in the text, friaries were established at Schwyz (1586), Appenzel (1587), Solothurn (1588), Baden-in-Argan (1588). In the *Bullar. Ord. Cap.* IV, p. 364, the date of Baden is given as 1591. cf. Magnus Kunle O. M. Cap. : *Die Schweizerisch Kapuziner provinz* (Einsiedeln, 1928).

increased to thirty-two and the number of friars had grown to four hundred and fifty.[49]

Thus within eight years from that fateful brief of Gregory XIII the Capuchins had spread to France, Spain, Savoy and Switzerland ; and four years later to Belgium. A second dispersion beyond the Alps began in 1593 when a body of friars, at the request of the Archduke Ferdinand and his wife Anna Caterina of the ducal house of Mantua, were sent to the Tyrol : that was the beginning of an invasion which within a quarter of a century was to cover the dominions of the Hapsburgs, Bavaria and the Rhine Provinces with Capuchin friaries and missions ; whilst in the same period Flanders and the Walloon country were to become flourishing provinces.[50] Within the same period, too, a missionary province was to be established for Ireland, England and Scotland, and a beginning was to be made of those extensive missionary enterprises which within little more than thirty years were to spread over three continents. But of this second wide dispersion the story will be told as this history proceeds.

[49] Holzapfel, op. cit., p. 560.
[50] *Bullar. Ord. Cap.* IV, p. 123, *seq.*

CHAPTER VIII

AN ADVENTURE INTO POLITICS

(i)

With their freedom to make settlements beyond the Alps, the Capuchins were now launched upon the great adventure of the Catholic Church to regain her lost provinces or at least to secure those in which the issue between Catholicism and Protestantism was still in the balance. It had taken the authorities in the Church a long time to realise the seriousness of the Protestant revolt. A false sense of security and a too great preoccupation with Italian politics had blunted the perception of the Roman Court ; and when at last the disaster had come and heresy had advanced almost to the walls of Rome, the Church had been forced to fall back upon defensive tactics to save the principle of her authority and retard the spread of " the new teaching." During that first period of defensive reorganisation the Capuchins had suffered much from the atmosphere of suspicion and distrust always generated by great moral convulsions ; as did many loyal Catholics in every rank of the Catholic body. Even the Jesuits, safeguarded as they were by their acknowledged position as the Pretorian guard of the papacy, did not escape a suspicion of unorthodoxy on the part of the ultra-conservatives. But they were a new society owning no definite kinship with any of the established parties within the Church. They might be regarded as upstarts and be viewed with the hostility commonly shown by older bodies or schools towards a successful upstart. But the Capuchins had been formed out of an older organisation ; their Reform was a reaction against the abuses and spiritual inefficiency of the medieval system in the days of its decline ; and not everybody can distinguish between an orthodox reaction and an unorthodox revolt. It was an evidence of the inherent sanity of the

Papacy—or, as Catholics hold, of the special divine Providence watching over the Church—that the Capuchins had been allowed to continue at all. For as the congregation grew and developed it became evident that here was something more than an ordinary reform of a religious order aspiring to revert to its original fervour and observance, as were for example the Franciscan reforms of the Spanish Discalceati and the Italian Riformati. There was that which gave the Capuchins a more distinctive and universal character. Perhaps it came from the very simplicity in which they sought to observe the primitive Franciscan life ; for the Franciscan beginning, like all really great beginnings, belonged to no particular age. It is as great ideals take root in the common life of men that they somewhat shed their universality and take on the colour and particular form of the common life in which they are planted ; and as they give rise to an organised society the colour deepens and the particular form becomes more marked. The Franciscans of the first days might have belonged to any age ; a generation later they were definitely of the thirteenth century, permeating the thirteenth century spirit with an original religious ideal and vigour, yet thereby becoming in some measure subject to the spirit they informed. But the Capuchins in their reaction towards primitive Franciscanism shed, consciously and unconsciously, much of the medieval tradition, and curiously wedded the primitive idealism and Rule of the Franciscan life with the mental outlook and character of the age into which they immerged. With them the primitive Franciscan spirit was reborn into the sixteenth century, mentally and spiritually as well as in point of date. That was their unique distinction amongst the Franciscan reforms of the sixteenth century. Hence, whilst it would be true to style them Franciscans of the primitive observance, it would be equally true to style them Franciscans of the Catholic Reformation period, so intimately akin were they in mind and spirit with the vital elements which distinguish that period of the world-life from the life of the centuries which immediately preceded it. To this fact must in part be attributed the great influence of the Capuchins during the period of the Catholic Reformation.

Not without significance is it that throughout the long

period of their great adventure for the Faith, most of their leaders were men who in any circumstances would have played a part in the remaking of the world either nationally or provincially. The statement frequently made by later historians, that the Capuchins were the "apostles of the lower classes," is true only in the sense of our Lord's declaration of His mission : " the poor have the Gospel preached to them." Their influence was felt on all sides, and their members were recruited from all classes. Of their leaders most came from the greater and lesser nobility or from the class which filled the universities and higher schools—the classes most nearly touched by the new world-spirit which was abroad.[1]

Of such were four novices who were to be found in the friary of Saint-Honoré in Paris in the early autumn of 1587 ; three of them were noblemen of France ; the fourth an English gentleman. The three Frenchmen were now known as Frères Ange, Léonard and Honoré ; in the world they were Henri de Joyeuse, comte de Bouchage, Jacques Favre de Querquifinan, and the seigneur Charles Bochart de Champigny. The English Frère Benoît, was William Fitch of Canfield in Essex, who had left his country to be reconciled to the Church of his fathers.

Frère Benoît[2] had entered the friary a few weeks before the Frenchmen ; and with him two other "Englishmen"; though one was a Scot, and the other from Wales. The Scot was named Frère Chrysostom ; he from Wales was known as Archange de Pembroke, and both were to win an honourable name in the story of the Capuchin missions. Frère Benoît too, was drawn to his native land by a missionary's zeal, but only to spend two years in gaol and then, as an act of royal grace, to be expelled the kingdom. That adventure doubtless added to his merits ; but it is as a master-mystic

[1] Henri Brémond : *Histoire Littéraire du Sentiment Religieux en France* (Paris, 1916), I, p. 141, has remarked of the French Capuchins : " *Les premiers Capucins français comptent dans leur rangs presque autant d'humanistes et peut-être plus de gentilhommes que les Jésuites*," but the history of the Capuchins in Italy, Spain, the Netherlands and England during the period of the Counter-Reformation bears out the statement in the text.

[2] cf. *Jacques Brousse : La Vie, Conversion et Conversation miraculeuse du R. Père P. Benoist Anglois* (Paris, 1621).
Boverius, *Annales, anno* 1610, 30, *seq.*

and a leader in the religious revival in France that he will appear in these pages.

For the moment we are more concerned with his French companions in the friary, whose entrance amongst the Capuchins was the sensation of Paris for more than a week. All three were within the circle of the Court ; Henri de Joyeuse in the heart of it. For he was of that boon company —the Joyeuses and the Nogarets—upon whom Henri III lavished titles and wealth in the fond hope of surrounding himself with loyal friends as against the party leaders whose power and ambitions drove him to distraction.[3] A weak man was Henri III, perhaps not wholly sane ; a strange mixture of the *dévot* and the rake ; in his pathetic loneliness appealing for the affection of a friend. His clinging affection for Henri de Joyeuse must be put to his credit ;[4] for Henri de Joyeuse in the midst of his court life had kept his soul free ; and his natural gaiety cloaked a serious mind and a spirit that looked beyond the passing moment.[5] His was the laughing spirit so deeply earnest, often found in Languedoc. His brothers worshipped him with the tenderest affection—no light witness to a man's character ;[6] and his brief married life was of the happiest. Catherine de Nogaret de la Valette, his wife, was of as serious a mind as her husband. It was agreed between them that at the death of the one, the other should enter a religious order. When a few months after his wife's death Henri de Joyeuse, riding with the king, came across some Capuchins on the road, he remembered his promise and straightway felt himself drawn to the Capuchin Reform. Some weeks later, to the amazement of those who knew him, he quietly became a novice in the friary of Saint-Honoré. That day—it was September 4—he should have

[3] Anne de Joyeuse, the eldest brother of Henri, was created duc de Joyeuse and married to the queen's sister, Marguerite de Vaudemont ; Scipion, the second brother, was made Grand Prieur of Languedoc ; François was created Archbishop of Narbonne and Cardinal.

[4] See the king's letters on the entrance of Henri de Joyeuse into the Capuchin friary, published by P. Edouard d'Alençon : *Pages inédites de la vie du P. Ange de Joyeuse*, in *Etudes Franciscaines*, August 1913, p. 138, *seq.*

[5] The story of Henri de Joyeuse has been frequently told. Much that has been written of him is pure romance. But see Jacques Brousse, *La vie du R. P. Ange de Joyeuse* (Paris, 1621) and the critical study of his life by P. Apollinaire de Valence in *Histoire des Capucins*, II, pp. 1-176 and the valuable *Pièces extraites du cabinet du Cardinal de Plaisance*, *ibid.*, III, p. 204, *seq.*

[6] cf. Edouard d'Alençon, *Pages inédites, ut supra.*

presided at a meeting of the Confraternity of the *Penitents Gris*. The fraternity were awaiting his arrival when a messenger brought word that he had entered the friary as a novice and consequently could not attend the meeting. It fell to his friend, Charles Bouchart de Champigny, to announce the news. Overcome with emotion, the young de Champigny, who had himself been contemplating a similar step, enthusiastically spoke of the sacredness and privilege of the religious life which de Joyeuse had embraced. His address became a sermon. Jacques Favre de Querquifinan, listening to de Champigny, at once resolved to follow de Joyeuse. Within ten days the three friends were reunited as Capuchin novices. Thereupon their relatives and friends were astir. They invaded the friary and begged the novices to return. The king came and protested that life without de Joyeuse at his side would be mere desolation. For their own greater peace the novices were sent to Orleans. Again the king protested ; he reproached the guardian of the Paris friary for denying him at least an occasional sight of de Joyeuse and the benefit of his spiritual conversation. Then others of the *Penitents Gris* followed the three leaders and Paris knew not who next would became a Capuchin.

But shortly Paris had other things to think of. Events were shaping which have an immediate interest for this story. On October 20 occurred the disaster of Coutras when Henri of Navarre defeated the royal army led by Duc Anne de Joyeuse ; and the duke and his youngest brother Claude were done to death by a private assassin after the battle ; and this was followed by what many considered a shameful peace on the part of the king. Thereupon suspicion of the king's sincerity grew apace ; to the Ligueurs he seemed an ally of the hated Huguenots. In truth the king feared both Ligueurs and Huguenots ; to him the Ligueur appeared nothing more than the sword in the hand of the Guise whom he suspected of aiming at the throne. Henri of Navarre—twice perverted Protestant and therefore unthinkable to the Ligueurs as a future king of France—had been acknowledged rightful heir by the king three years previously on the death of the duc d'Alençon and thereupon that party of Catholics who followed Montmorency as against the Guise, declared themselves for Navarre. The war which followed was very

largely a party struggle between the Montmorency and the Guise as to who should hold the power in the State ; largely too a struggle between the foreign influences at the Court and those who claimed that France was for the French ; yet with these purely political issues religion was inextricably involved. Roughly speaking the Huguenots stood for a Protestant France, the Ligueurs for a Catholic France and the Politiques for a State in which both religions should be recognised though the monarchy would be Catholic ; for the Politiques, though supporting the succession of the Protestant Navarre, had no doubt of his reversion to Catholicism once he gained the crown.[7] But behind the nobles were the people and to them undoubtedly the religious question was uppermost in their minds ; though often enough even with these religion and politics were closely interwoven. Yet for the Ligueurs at large the issue they faced was the preservation of France as a Catholic nation. If to us of to-day the Ligueurs seem intolerant, let us remember that the Huguenots were equally, if not more, intolerant. Huguenot supremacy would have meant the entire suppression of Catholicism ; as in fact it did wherever the Huguenots held the power. We speak with virtuous horror of St. Bartholomew's Eve ; but the progress of the Huguenot faith in France had been marked by repeated massacres of the Catholics, equally barbarous. The Politiques with their professed tolerance for the Huguenots were trusted by neither of the extreme parties.

Such was the feeling when Henri III brought his Swiss troops to Paris in 1588 as a defence against the growing hostility of the citizens and the power of the Guise. That inept move led to the day of the barricades when Paris rose in revolt and the king's life was saved only by the connivance of de Guise. Then came negotiations and the meeting of the States-General at Blois in December. Meanwhile, however, the parish-priests and the preachers had become the virtual leaders of the citizens in revolt. At Blois the king sullenly capitulated ; then immediately sought to revenge himself by the brutal murder of the duc de Guise and his brother

7 It should be remembered that Montmorency, the leader of the Politiques, had earlier urged the alliance of France with the Catholic powers as against the Protestant powers ; whereas the Guises, the leaders of the Ligue, had favoured the alliance with the Turks and Protesttan states. Such was the political confusion of the period.

the cardinal. It was a mad act. Paris in a frenzy renounced its allegiance and the city witnessed horrors which anticipated the revolution two centuries later. The nobles no longer had the power to control the populace. Pope Sixtus V on hearing of the double murder excommunicated the king ; yet because he would not definitely outlaw Henri de Navarre beyond hope of reconciliation, the Paris mob spoke of outlawing the Pope. The king in alliance with Navarre marched on Paris—there to meet his death at the hand of the fanatic Jacques Clement on August 1. Meanwhile the revolution had spread. In Toulouse the people had declared against Henri III in spite of the vacillating attitude of the parliament and here, as in Paris, hesitancy to renounce allegiance to the king met with summary vengeance. The premier-president Duranti, notwithstanding his past record as an adherent of the Ligue, had been brutally murdered by the populace on February 10.

But the death of Henri III brought about a further complication. Henri of Navarre by law was now King of France, unless indeed his excommunication as a pervert rendered him incapable of assuming the crown as the Ligueurs contended. The war was now carried on with more intense feeling. True, the duc de Mayenne who succeeded his brother the duc de Guise as leader of the Ligue, lacked the gift of leadership and the military talent of his murdered brother. At Arques and Ivry Navarre was victor. And now relations between the nobles of the Ligue and the citizens of Paris grew strained. Terrorism reigned in the city and within the Ligue two parties were forming ; the people's party supported by Spain, and the nobles some of whom at least were anxious to carve out independent principalities for themselves. The day came when Mayenne brought his army to Paris and hanged a number of the citizen-Ligueurs and crushed the terrorism by force. With the aid of the Spaniards the Ligue continued to struggle for another four years but with a gradually lessening support from the nation at large. Henri IV made his abjuration of the Calvinist faith at St Denys in the hands of the Archbishop of Bourges on July 25, 1593 ; but the absolution given him was invalid according to the ecclesiastical law since his case was reserved to the Pope. Thereupon fresh fuel was added to the fire and a new

schism occurred in the ranks of the Ligueurs. Those of Gallican tendencies upheld the absolution pronounced by the Archbishop ; the more orthodox Catholics refused to recognise the king till he should be absolved by the Pope. When at length in September 1595, the king was absolved by the Pope, the Ligue was practically dissolved ; only in Brittany did the gallant Mercœur maintain an armed opposition for three years longer.

The Ligue had done its work so far as religion was concerned ; it had undoubtedly kept France amongst the Catholic nations. And yet it had been a perilous adventure for the Church as well as the monarchy. It had raised the spectre of a republic or confederated State, and had resuscitated Gallicanism ; and by an irony of fate it became the task of Henri IV to restore the monarchy to power and to strengthen the authority of the Papacy in the Church in France.

So much it has been necessary to relate to make clear the position of the Capuchins in France at this period.

At the beginning of the uprising in Paris in 1588 Bernardo d'Osimo, the Capuchin provincial, assembled his friars and bade them work and pray for peace; and to emphasise his message he led them on a penitential pilgrimage to our Lady of Chartres. It was a dramatic gesture to still the passions of the people. At the head of the procession walked Frère Ange de Joyeuse bearing a cross and crowned with a crown of thorns, he the king's favourite ; and how the people at that moment hated the king's favourites ! On either side of Frère Ange walked friars bearing emblems of our Lord's Passion : behind came the body of the friars chanting litanies and psalms. Many who watched them wept with emotion; it was a day of emotions though mostly of fiery passion.[8]

A year later Girolamo da Castel-Ferretti, the successor of Bernardo d'Osimo, thought well to send Frère Ange and Frère Honoré to Italy to study theology at Venice. Thus it was at a distance that these two heard of the murder of the Guise ; yet for Ange de Joyeuse the event was to have unlooked-for consequences—though not immediately.

[8] Bernardo had already won the heart of the Parisians by his mystery-representations in the Church of St. Honoré ; cf. Boverius, *Annales, anno* 1891, 7, *seq.*

LE PÈRE ANGE DE JOYEUSE

Now began the six troublous years which were to try the spirit of the Capuchins as of all in France. Hitherto the Capuchins had kept apart from the party struggles, perhaps owing to the moderating influence of their Italian superiors. Now it was no longer possible that they should not in some way be drawn into it. At Orléans, Pierre Deschamps—he who had been the leader of the Picpus "Capuchins"—boldly denounced the king's perfidy in murdering the Guise. That he did so from a high sense of duty cannot be doubted. He had been in high favour at the Court; he had been shielded in his time of trouble by the royal protection: later, Henri III and his queen had several times chosen him to carry their votive gifts to the churches in the Holy Land, when the queen was hoping by prayer to obtain an heir for the throne. His outspoken denunciation aroused the wrath of some Huguenots: and a plot was laid to murder him; but the plot miscarried and it was the saintly Pierre Besson, another of the Picpus band, who was slain as he stopped to pray at a wayside shrine of our Lady on the road which leads from Orléans to Paris.[9] His slayers mistook him for Pierre Deschamps. Warned of the danger, the elder Pierre fled incontinently to Brussels and died there a few days after his arrival. There was a pathetic sadness about his death. On reaching Brussels, worn out by the journey, he went to the friary of the Capuchins and told his story. He had no credentials to prove his identity, and was refused admittance. At length the Carmelite friars in the city took him in and it was in their midst he died.[10] One writer indeed tells us that Pierre Deschamps' flight was caused by his refusal to countenance "the king's conspiracy to kill the heretics, though he himself laboured zealously to convert them."[11] If that statement has any foundation in fact it only brings him into line with the general conduct of the Capuchins during this perilous period when the churches were sounding with the call of the preachers to the citizens of Paris and elsewhere, to rise and slay the enemies of the Faith: for it is to their credit that there is no known instance either in Paris or Toulouse,

[9] Boverius, *Annales*, *anno* 1589, p. 68; *Abrégé Historique des Ill. Capucins*, MS. cit., 3.

[10] Boverius, *Annales*, *anno* 1589, 75.

[11] *Bibl. Script. Ord. Cap.*, p. 212.

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where passion was at its height, of a Capuchin joining in that unholy crusade.[12] Yet some of them became ardent Ligueurs, especially in Languedoc, and by their activities in the politics of the Ligue drew upon themselves the stern rebuke of the Roman Visitor, Fra Anselmo da Reggio.[13] But these were the few. As a body they supported the Ligue purely in its determination to maintain the Catholic character of the monarchy ; and their opposition to Navarre was dictated by conscientious loyalty to the laws of the Church, not from factious political motive : that perhaps partly explains why throughout the war the Capuchins kept the respect and often the affection of the Politiques as well as of the Ligueurs, and won the admiration of Navarre himself ; for Navarre never failed to recognise the courage of conviction. Thus when in 1591 Navarre entered Andelys in Normandy he sent word to the Capuchin friary that he would attend Vespers in their church. The guardian firmly informed the duc de Longueville, the king's messenger, that the laws of the Church forbade them to celebrate divine service in the presence of those under the Church's ban. De Longueville took the high hand and threatened that unless Vespers were chanted, the friary would be burnt to the ground and the friars dealt with as traitors ; and so turned on his heel and swung out of the friary, leaving the friars in fear of death. But shortly the duc de Nevers arrived to assure them on the part of the king that he was well affected towards them and would respect their scruples.[14] It was so that Navarre eventually won the kingdom. However, at Caen, a Huguenot stronghold, the Capuchins voluntarily quitted the town that they might not be drawn into the political troubles.[15]

(ii)

But it was in Languedoc that the struggle was carried on in its bitterest form ; and it was here that the Capuchins came

[12] Referring to Toulouse P. Apollinaire de Valence (op. cit., II, p. 12, note 1) says : " *Nous n'avons eu le chagrin de rencontrer aucun Capucin parmi ceux de ces religieux qui s'acquirent alors dans Toulouse une triste notoriété.*"

[13] cf. *Histoire des Capucins*, op. cit., II, p. 1. Boverius, *Annales*, *anno* 1590, 2.

[14] *Neustria Seraphica seu memoriale FF. Min. Cap. provinciae Normaniae* in *Anal. Ord. Cap.* XXVIII, p. 122.

[15] *ibid.*, p. 266.

into greater prominence during the war. Guienne was controlled by the Huguenots : Toulouse and its territory was in the hands of the Ligueurs ; outside Toulouse to the east Catholics were sharply divided into Ligueurs and Politiques, but the Politiques were in the ascendant. At Béziers Henri Montmorency held his court ; in Toulouse the people looked to the Joyeuse as their natural leaders. Catherine de Medicis had vainly striven to bring about a matrimonial alliance between Joyeuse and Montmorency, thinking thus to strengthen at once the royalist and the Catholic cause in that part of the kingdom ; but the Joyeuse, royal favourites though they were, had a pride of Faith which would not brook an alliance with a Politique ; though they did not hesitate at times to risk the anger of the populace by their protection of unoffending Huguenots.[16] As we have seen the constable Henri Montmorency favoured the Capuchins with as much goodwill as did the Tolosans ; at his own expense he had settled them in Béziers and Agde in spite of Huguenot opposition, and at no time did his reverence for them wane ; they had the freedom of his court and could enter at their will ; which they did, not always as petitioners for his favour. Thus when in 1587 Montmorency arrested Jean Vosson, the first president of the parliament of Béziers, on suspicion of conspiring to deliver the city to the Ligueurs and had him strangled in prison without trial, Frère Martial de Limoges, who was then preaching a course of sermons in the Cathedral, went to the palace and in the presence of the courtiers, denounced the crime. Even Montmorency himself was taken aback by his daring and exclaimed : " My good Father, I think you have lost your senses." " Would to God," replied Frère Martial, " that I were the fool and you not the tyrant. But the just God sees you and in time will punish your crime in murdering an innocent man." To the astonishment of the court, Montmorency accepted the rebuke with a good grace and would not allow the friar to be molested.[17]

[16] In August, 1572, the Mareschal de Joyeuse (father of the first duke) as governor of the province had refused to execute the king's orders to exterminate the Huguenots. The massacre of October 4, when three hundred Huguenots were slain, occurred during his absence at Béziers ; it was due to a popular rising.

[17] cf. P. Apollinaire : *Histoire des Capucins*, op. cit., I, pp. 334-335.

Three years later when the war between the Ligueurs and the Politiques was at its bitterest, two Capuchins, Pères David de Castelnandary and Joseph de Marseille, were on their way from Toulouse to Villenouvelle a few days before Palm Sunday, when they were set upon by a band of Huguenots and cruelly ill-treated. The Seigneur de Maureville, a Politique, rescued them and brought them to his château; there in his chapel they celebrated the Holy Week and Easter services ; in Easter week de Maureville himself conducted them back to Toulouse.[18]

But as at Paris so in Toulouse, the murder of the duc de Guise had given a new sacredness to the Ligueur in the eyes of many Catholics who until now had given the Ligueur an unimpassioned support. The king's mad act had stamped the Politiques in the eyes of the Ligueurs with the dye of his infamy ; and when on the assassination of Henri III, the Politiques acknowledged the Huguenot Navarre as king, their act was taken as the consummation of villainy. From that moment the Capuchins ranged themselves on the side of the Ligue, and some of them actively adopted its political programme, though to their honour they took no part in the incitement to the massacre of the Ligue's opponents.

And now it is that Frère Ange de Joyeuse comes into the fray, and eventually finds himself the captain of the Ligueurs in Toulouse.

Scipion de Joyeuse, who had succeeded to the dukedom on the death of his brother Anne, abandoned the king after his excommunication by the Pope and placed himself at the head of the Ligue in Languedoc.[19] His agents in his negotiations with Mayenne and the King of Spain were Capuchins.[20] Fra Anselmo, the Roman Visitor, protested against their employment in political affairs ; but beyond a protest, he could do nothing. At that moment the Ligue spelt Catho-

[18] *ibid.*, p. 342, *seq.* Père David died a few months later from the effects of his ill-treatment. P. Apollinaire points out that this ill-treatment was at this period an isolated incident in Languedoc. It was after the war of the Ligue, when the Capuchins began their intensive activity for the recovery of Languedoc to the Catholic Faith, that they incurred the hostility of the Huguenots.

[19] He accepted nomination as lieutenant-governor of Languedoc from the duc de Mayenne on June 8, 1589. On the other hand, François Cardinal de Joyeuse, protector of French interests at the Papal Court, continued in his allegiance to the king.

[20] *Histoire des Capucins*, op. cit., II, p. 21.

licism in the eyes of the Tolosans. Two years later we find Frère Ange de Joyeuse in Provence, not improbably commissioned by the Pope himself to take a hand in the political struggle.

Of all places outside France, Venice, whither he had been sent to study theology in 1589, was the last place where a man of the antecedents and family connexions of Ange de Joyeuse would find peace of mind in the political situation which had arisen ; for Venice watched events in France with a keen eye to its own political advantage and its sympathies were with Henri of Navarre and the Politiques. Hardly in fact had Frère Ange settled there than he discovered that in Venice he would not be free from the distractions of the world he had left.[21] A visit from his brother, the Cardinal de Joyeuse, who arrived in Venice after the excommunication of Henri III, did not contribute to his peace. Meanwhile he had been ordained priest and was profiting spiritually by the counsels of that remarkable saint, Fra Lorenzo da Brindisi, under whom he was making his studies.

In 1591, as we have said, he was in Provence. He went there as an affiliated member of that Capuchin province, and the following year was appointed guardian of the friary at Arles. That he went to Provence in search of peace of soul no one will believe. Take the situation in which he found himself ; his cousin the duc de Nemours was strengthening his position as governor of Lyonnais with a view to an independent principality ; another relative, Bernard de la Valette, governor of Provence, was in sympathy with the Ligueurs of the South and their contemplated scheme of a political confederation under the protection of Spain. The Pope, without definitely committing himself to the scheme, had blessed the project as an alternative to a Protestant monarchy. Was Frère Ange sent to Provence to watch the progress of the Ligue and to intervene as circumstances should demand ? We can only hazard a conjecture. In January, 1592, Bernard de la Valette was killed at the siege of Roquebrune in war with the Duke of Savoy, and his

[21] See the letter of the Procurator of the Order, Fra Cristoforo d'Assisi, dated March 5, 1589, granting him permission " to go to a friary in Lorraine or in some other Province of Italy in order that he might be free from the affairs and distractions of the world." Arch. Vatic. *Politicorum*, I, 25, fol. 384 ; given in *Histoire des Capucins*, op. cit., II, pp. 24-25.

younger brother the duc d'Epernon, brother-in-law to Frère Ange, was appointed by Henri of Navarre governor of Provence. A shifty character was d'Epernon, playing always for his own hand, no matter to whom he swore his loyalty.

Meanwhile Scipion de Joyeuse was heading a punitive expedition against the Huguenots of Montaubon who had ravaged the territory of Toulouse. The Huguenots had appealed to de Themines the Politique for aid to repel the Tolosans. D'Epernon, on plea of loyalty to the king, took sides with de Themines. Frère Ange now pays him a visit and endeavours, though unsuccessfully, to gain, if not his support for Toulouse, at least his neutrality.

Then in October came the military disaster at Villemur when in the retreat Scipion de Joyeuse was drowned in the river Tarn. Had he listened to Frère Ange, he would have retired earlier from Villemur before de Themines' forces could come to the aid of the town ; and Ange de Joyeuse might not have become a favourite subject of romantic story-tellers.

The disaster of Villemur was a blow the Tolosans were not prepared for. It left them without a military leader and threatened to complete the triumph of the Huguenots and Politiques, and, as many believed, the entire subversion of the Catholic Faith in Languedoc.

And now Toulouse and all that was Catholic in Languedoc, bishops and clergy, the religious orders, the magistrates and people, with one voice demanded that Frère Ange, now by right duc de Joyeuse, should assume the government of Toulouse and become captain-general of the army. Frère Ange was at the moment in the friary in Toulouse. The Estates were assembled and theologians of repute were called in to decide whether in such an emergency as threatened both the Catholic Faith and the liberty of Toulouse, it was the duty of Frère Ange to leave his friary and take up the duties which his birth and the city's choice imposed upon him. Was it lawful for him to do so ? Could he in conscience refuse ? were the two questions the theologians must answer. Their unanimous reply was that it was not only lawful but a duty he could not in conscience lay aside ; the public good demanded the sacrifice of his personal inclinations. The guardian of the Capuchins was then appealed to and he and

the senior members of the community agreed with the theologians. Thereupon Frère Ange reluctantly consented on condition that when he was no longer needed for the service of Toulouse he should be free to return to his friary. Further he stipulated that the matter should be submitted to the General of the Order and to the Pope as soon as might be, for their approbation. He then doffed his habit—not without tears, said the brothers who were with him—and donned the robes of office. In the Council Hall he was received with acclamation as governor of Toulouse and commandant of the army.[22] A messenger was then despatched to the Pope to relate what had happened and to request his sanction.[23] This is not the place to enter into the details of the administration and conduct of Frère Ange, now Henri duc de Joyeuse, during the seven years of his government of Toulouse and Languedoc. He at once reorganised the army, and his military dispositions won the respect of Montmorency and led to the conclusion of a truce for a year between the two leaders—a truce which was further extended before the end of the year. In October, 1593, the Ligueurs of the South met at Albi and swore not to recognise any but a Catholic king "approved by the Pope according to the ancient tradition of France"; but it is evident that the duc de Joyeuse and his brother the cardinal were already conscious that the only solution of the nation's crisis lay in Navarre seeking his absolution from the Pope and becoming the approved Catholic king of France; and their resistance from this time was to force the king to take that step. When eventually Henri IV submitted to the Pope and was absolved, the duc de Joyeuse was ready to give him his allegiance. For awhile he was held back by his loyalty to the Tolosans. The king wished to reward Henri Montmorency by making him governor of the whole of Languedoc; but the Tolosans refused to be governed by one whom they had so stoutly resisted and whom they could not yet forgive. In 1596 the king gave way and Henri de Joyeuse was confirmed as governor of Toulouse.

[22] For a full account of these proceedings see *Pièces extraites du cabinet du Cardinal de Plaissance, ut supra.*

[23] The messenger, however, was captured by pirates as he was crossing the sea, and it was not for some months that official news reached the Pope.

Two years before this the duke had ceased to be a Capuchin ; it was considered more becoming that he should be transferred to the military order of St. John of Jerusalem, and Clement VIII issued briefs to that effect.[24] It was confidently hoped by the Tolosans that the duc de Joyeuse be finally given back to them ; and it does not seem improbable that he himself for a time regarded his return to the Capuchins as no longer practicable. Yet not for long. In 1597 at the time of his daughter's marriage to the duc de Montpensier, he was already contemplating his return to the Order he had left, and a letter he received about this time from his fellow-novice, Benoit de Canfield, the Englishman, strengthened his resolve.[25] But there were difficulties in the way. The Tolosans and his friends at Court would certainly strive to prevent the accomplishment of his wish ; and the General of the Capuchins, when first approached, hesitated : he doubted whether such a step would be pleasing to the Pope, the king, and the people. De Joyeuse thereupon appealed directly and successfully to the Pope ; the work, he wrote, which had drawn him from the cloister was finished : France had a Catholic king and the affairs of Toulouse were satisfactorily settled. He might have added that even the long-standing hostility between the houses of Montmorency and Joyeuse was ended and the two seigneurs were friends.[26]

On May 8, 1599 Henri de Joyeuse again put on the Capuchin habit and renewed his vows in the friary of Saint-Honoré, Paris, where he had been first received as a novice twelve years before. The final step was taken swiftly and secretly before anyone, except the Pope and the Capuchins, was aware that it was seriously contemplated. Even the duke's household—he was on a visit to the court at Paris — were unaware of his purpose, when at dusk in the evening the duke bade them not disturb him in his chamber. His affairs had been put in order ; and he had sent a letter to be delivered the following morning to the king by the hands of

[24] The brief dated June 9, 1594, and a second brief dated May 5, 1595, are published from the originals in the Vatican Archives in *Histoire des Capucins*, op. cit., III, p. 252, *seq.* cf. *Bullar, Ord. Cap.* V, pp. 31-32.

[25] See the letter in *Histoire des Capucins*, op. cit., II, p. 106, *seq.* The letter is further interesting as a revelation of the soul of the writer.

[26] See the letters of Joyeuse to Montmorency (*Biblioth. Nat.*, MSS. FF3570, fol. 48 ; 3607, fol. 84) *ibid.*, pp. 79, 136.

the duc de Montpensier. In the dusk of the evening Henri de Joyeuse arrived at the Capuchin friary ; by eleven o'clock he was again Frère Ange ; and at midnight he took his place amongst the brethren at the midnight office in the church. When the next morning the king received his letter, he is said to have exclaimed : " Now surely we shall have peace in the kingdom when our captains turn monks !" but he went straightway to visit Joyeuse in his friar's cell ; and that day there was no peace in the friary because of the visitors who arrived to bid the duke farewell.[27]

The return of Ange de Joyeuse, with all it signified as to the political situation, was to the Capuchins not the only happy issue of the fierce strife in Languedoc. There was the conversion (as they viewed it) of Henri Montmorency, the founder of their friaries at Béziers and Agde, but still the leader of the Politiques. He too, in some sort, ended his days as a Capuchin after some years of deepening piety. They say his conversion began that day when Frère Martial de Limoges bearded him in the midst of his court for the murder of Jean Vosson ; for from that time " there came a great change in the conduct of the Constable."[28] After the peace it was his wish to build himself a small house attached to the sanctuary of Notre Dame du Grau, the Capuchin church at Agde, that he might retire there and prepare himself for his end ; but the king's wish kept him busy with affairs of State. When at last weighed down with years he obtained permission to retire from the court, it was at Agde under the spiritual direction of his Capuchin confessor that he spent his last days in religious exercises and deeds of charity. And when he died he was clothed, as he had wished, in the Capuchin habit " as one of the brethren " and buried without pomp in a simple grave before the altar in the church.[29]

[27] It was only at the expressed wish of the Capuchins that de Joyeuse returned to the Order in Paris ; his own inclination had been to seek readmission to the Order in Switzerland or some province where he was less well known.

[28] *Receuil chronologique* quoted in *Histoire des Capucins*, op. cit. I, p. 336.

[29] *Conversion et deenières années du connétable Henri de Montmorenci, ibid.*, I, p. 333, *seq.* Henri Montmorenci died on April 12, 1614.

(iii)

In the meantime, whilst Henri de Joyeuse (as he was again called) was serving the Church and Toulouse in the way his conscience and the will of his ecclesiastical superiors had bade him, the Capuchins were suffering much for the faith that was in them—though but for Navarre himself they might have suffered more. It all came about because Navarre though a Protestant and personally excommunicated by the Pope would insist—and his officials insisted even more—that public prayers should be offered for him in all the churches of France ; and this insistence became general after the abortive ceremony of abjuration at St. Denis. Before that abjuration the clergy generally refused to pray for him ; after the ceremony at St. Denis most of them, whether from conviction or from fear, prayed publicly for the king. But amongst the few who still refused on the ground that the king's absolution was invalid, were the Capuchins.[30]

The situation as it developed had its incidents not without a dry humour, though tragic enough to the sufferers. When Navarre came to Lyons after his abjuration at St. Denis, the king's lieutenant visited the Capuchin friary to demand public prayers for the king. He was met by the venerable Jean de Maurienne who replied that it could not be done without violating their conscience as true sons of the church. The lieutenant in a temper bade them in the king's name leave the city at once. It was then nightfall. Early next morning before daybreak the friars left their friary and set out to leave the city, chanting as they went the psalm *In exitu Israel*. They chanced to pass under the window of the chamber where the king was sleeping. Aroused by the chant, the king asked his servant what the noise meant and was told the Capuchins were leaving the city as he had ordered. The king went to the window and putting out his head, bade them return to the friary ; only as a favour he begged they would cease their chanting ! But in after days

[30] Other religious who refused were the Jesuits, Minims and Carthusians. In Languedoc the Carmelites also refused. cf. *Recherches historiques sur la compagnie de Jésus du temps P. Coton* (Lyon, 1876) I, p. 153 ; *Histoire des Capucins*, op. cit., I, p. 345.

he would speak of Père Jean de Maurienne as the model of what a religious ought to be.[31]

It was from the city officials, anxious to prove their loyalty now that Navarre was actually king, that the friars suffered most. Thus there was the affair at Béziers which dragged on for months. The bishop, of Politique tendencies, had ordered public prayers for the king after the abjuration at St. Denis ; only the Capuchins and Carmelites refused to obey the order. D'Ausserre, president of the parliament, " the smallest and humblest creature of his majesty " as he signs himself, thereupon undertook to force the Capuchins to obey. Day after day he sent peremptory orders and threatening messages, only to receive the same reply : " until the Pope permits, our conscience will not allow." Then he had recourse to all manner of petty persecutions ; and even threatened to exile the religious and put the guardian to death. At that the guardian and friars secretly left the city and fled to Narbonne. Then the citizens, loyalists as they were, rose up in wrath against d'Ausserre ; and he must plead with the Provincial Minister to order the friars to return. Friars from another community are sent there ; and the papal legate at Avignon instructs them that they may pray for the king with a clear conscience. They thereupon pray for the king at all their services in choir. Still the persecution continues. Just then the General of the Order passes through Languedoc on his way to Spain and forbids the friars to pray publicly for the king till Rome has spoken. More threats from d'Ausserre ; who meanwhile writes his fulsome letters to the king testifying to his own activity on behalf of his majesty's welfare, than which he desires nothing else on earth. Then follows a second flight of the Capuchins and immediately messengers are kept busy carrying appeals to whomsoever might have influence in the matter, to Montmorency, to Ventadour, even to Cardinal Aldobrandini in Rome, to prevail upon the friars to return. They do eventually return when word has come from Rome that they may lawfully pray for the king even though he be not yet absolved. President d'Ausserre receives them ; he attends mass in their church and piously assists at the prayer for the king. " When the priest pronounces the words : *Henricus Rex noster*, the president beams

[31] *Les Capucins en Franche-Comté*, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

with happiness and throws himself upon his two knees ; but when the priest says : *Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum*, he puts on his hat." So writes the Guienne chronicler, not without pardonable malice.[32]

In Paris the king one day entered the church of St. Honoré whilst mass was being said : the celebrant at once left the altar. There followed a visit from the Cardinal Gondi to the Capuchin friary, who on behalf of the king remonstrated, and urged the friars to obey the king's order as the other clergy were doing. They replied that they must obey God rather than man ; the king was excommunicated and the law of the Church was clear. At this the king was angered and threatened to expel them from the kingdom. The Cardinal prayed him to be patient, and returned to the friary. It was arranged that the friars should send a messenger to Rome to consult the Pope. Messengers were sent who laid the situation before Clement VIII ; he bade them verbally to inform their superiors that he was willing the friars should pray for the king until it was ordered otherwise. The Capuchins on receiving this message despatched Père Pacifique de Souzy to wait on the king at Fontainebleau, and inform his majesty of the Pope's message. Père Pacifique was well received and when he had given the message the king asked him if he had already that day celebrated mass. On learning that the friar had yet to say his mass, the king asked him to celebrate in the royal chapel, and himself was present with some of his courtiers. Afterwards he remarked to those who were with him : " These Capuchins are good men :[33] their conduct proves it. For conscience sake they resisted me and so proved they loved and did not hate me. They will, I am certain, be faithful to me now as they have been to the Roman Church." From that time the king frequently attended mass at Saint-Honoré and often went to listen to the Capuchin preachers.[34]

Yet towards the end of 1598 the intervention of two Capuchins in the matter of the registration of the Edict of Nantes led to a contest between the friars and the parliament

[32] *Histoire des Capucins*, op. cit., I, pp. 345-371. See the fuller account in *Capucins et Huguenots dans le Languedoc*, loc. cit.

[33] " Les Capucins sont gens de bien."

[34] *Histoire des Capucins*, op. cit., I, p. 346, *seq.*

of Paris, in which the king was compelled to play a not too willing part.

It happened thus. In April, 1598 the king had issued the famous Edict of Nantes. To most of the Catholics it seemed an act of weakness, if not of perfidy, tending to strengthen the Huguenot party, and thus to endanger the peace of the kingdom—as in fact it did; for the Huguenots in their strongholds in the South ignored the provisions in favour of the Catholics whilst claiming the rights accorded to themselves; and thus caused the last of the religious wars under Louis XIII. But the hand of Henri IV had been forced at the siege of Amiens when the Huguenots demanded the price of their allegiance.

The edict was still awaiting its formal registration by the Paris parliament to become the law of the kingdom. We must remember the days of suffering the nation had passed through to judge rightly the actions of men on both sides. Père Jean-Baptiste Brulart de Sillery, brother of the future chancellor, was preaching the Advent in the church of Sainte-Etienne-du-Mont. All Paris was simmering with excitement over the edict: the parliament hesitating yet bending to the influence of the Huguenots who had a place in it. Père Jean-Baptiste, ever fearless as he was ardent, proposed to organise with the sanction of the bishop of Paris a solemn procession of the Blessed Sacrament through the streets of the city, in which all the citizens were invited to join, to pray that God would avert the registration of the edict. At that the parliament took fright and promptly forbade the procession. On January 6, the feast of the Epiphany, Jean-Baptiste, preaching in the church of Saint André-des-Arts in the presence of the Procurer-General, passionately denounced the edict and declared that no member of parliament could vote for its registration without sin. Jean-Baptiste was no unknown preacher; his brother was at the time a member of the court of parliament and shortly was to be sent to Rome as the king's envoy at the Papal Court. The following day or the day after, the king summoned the members of the parliament to his presence and courteously but firmly informed them that if they failed to register the edict, he would know how to supply their places: then addressing M. de Sillery he bade him

advise his brother, the Capuchin, to be more prudent in his words. The edict was registered on February 23. And there the matter might have ended. But the Lenten course in the church of Saint Germain-l'Auxerrois was that year preached by one of the most eloquent preachers in France, the Capuchin Père Archange de Lyon, and he took as his theme the vindication of the Catholic doctrine of the mass as against the recently published work of the Huguenot, Duplessis-Mornay.[35] To his astonishment on March 10, he received an intimation from the lieutenant-civil that he must moderate his language in his references to the teaching of the Huguenots and in particular in regard to the book of Duplessis-Mornay. Archange replied that his business was his own, as the lieutenant's business was his ; let each stick to his own last. The following Sunday the king was present when Père Archange continued his course. The preacher dealt with the falsified quotations from the Fathers of the Church with which Duplessis-Mornay supported his argument, and concluded by an appeal to the king to forbid the book. He appealed on the ground of justice, since the Huguenots would allow no Catholic book to be circulated in the towns under their control. Some days later the book was ordered to be publicly burnt. The event did not endear the Capuchins to the Paris parliament.

Then came the case of Marthe Brossier, the peasant girl possessed by a devil. At least so her father asserted when he brought her to Paris ; and so thought the theologians and physicians who examined her. The bishop of Paris was much exercised in mind, and in his perplexity sent for two Capuchins, Benoît de Canfield and Père Seraphin, to exorcise the girl according to the rite of the Church.[36] The case was a sensation of the day ; crowds assembled to witness the examinations. The king, fearing perhaps some political move—popular assemblies were dangerous things at the time—ordered the parliament to stop the examinations and to imprison the girl. In all probability the wisest course was to stop the case, but technically the act was a breach of

[35] *La Probation de la S. Messe et sacrifice.* (Paris, 1599.)

[36] An ordinance of the General Chapter of 1552 says : *Nullo modo fratres se immisceant in exorcismis et in conjurandis spiritibus. Anal. Ord. Cap.* V, p. 76 ; a prudent ordinance perhaps in an age when the conjuring of spirits was widely practised, as much amongst the Protestants as amongst the Catholics.

Canon Law and of the rights of the ecclesiastical court. What followed on the part of the Capuchins can only be justified by the circumstances. Let it be remembered that the authority of the Church was at grip with the growing erastianism of the Catholic States as well as with militant Protestantism : that is the keynote to the history of this time. The Capuchins with the Jesuits were at this period the most active protagonists of Papal authority and ecclesiastical liberty.

On the Sunday following the girl's imprisonment Père Archange de Lyon preached in the Capuchin church at Saint-Honoré and denounced the parliament for its illegal infraction of Canon Law. Thereupon the parliament sent an usher with a formal summons to Père Archange to appear before the parliament on a charge of contempt of the king's authority. Here was infraction number two of Canon Law, since as a religious Père Archange was in the first resort amenable only to an ecclesiastical court ; with which fact Archange was not slow to justify his refusal to obey the summons. Eventually, however, by a trick the parliament obtains possession of the persons of Père Archange and the vicar of the friary ; they spend a night in prison and next morning are brought before the parliament. They refuse to answer to the charge on the ground that they can be tried only by an ecclesiastical court, and in this they are supported by Jean-Baptiste de Sillery, the acting Provincial, who himself appeared before the parliament to enter a protest against their illegal assumption of jurisdiction. But the parliament over-rides their protest and forbids Père Archange to preach for six months. The Papal nuncio Silingardi, in sending a report of the affair to Cardinal Aldobrandini, wrote that the charge against Père Archange was but a pretext on the part of some members of the parliament of Huguenot sympathies to get rid of the preacher on account of his successful attack on Duplessis-Mornay's book.[37] As Père Archange was in any case due to return to his own province of Toulouse, the sentence of the Paris parliament did not affect him. But Jean-Baptiste de Sillery's protest on his behalf was not forgotten.

And now Ange de Joyeuse again enters the scene. It was said that when the usher brought the summons from the

[37] See the Nuncio's letter in *Histoire des Capucins*, op. cit., II, p. 166.

parliament to Archange de Lyon, and had taken his departure, leaving the summons behind him, the former governor of Languedoc picked up the summons and threw it after the departing usher. It may have been but malicious gossip meant to annoy the king, who at first did not approve of the high-handed treatment of the Capuchins. But a few weeks later a report was brought to the king that Ange de Joyeuse, in a sermon at Saint-Jacques-de-la-Boucherie, had protested vehemently against the violation of the Edict of Nantes to the prejudice of the Catholics, in the licence given to the Huguenots to establish a conventicle at Grigni within five leagues of Paris. The establishment of the Grigni conventicle was perhaps another instance of the growing power of the Huguenots in the parliament. The protest, coming from one of such rank and antecedents in the kingdom, could not be safely ignored. And now we have the singular case of the king writing to his two principal agents in Rome, the Cardinal de Joyeuse and M. de Sillery, suggesting that they apply to the General of the Capuchins to remove their brothers from France. The Father General readily acceded to the request : the political activities of some of the French friars, as we have seen, did not commend themselves to the Roman superiors ; and here was a case in which it would be difficult for one at a distance to distinguish between a legitimate and an illegitimate intervention. The letters of obedience calling Ange de Joyeuse and Jean-Baptiste de Sillery to Italy were actually sent to the king ; but again the Papal nuncio in Paris intervenes with an appeal to the Pope to prevent an injustice being done to the two Capuchins and an injury to the Catholic cause in France. The affair, he says, is nothing but a plot on the part of the parliament to bring about the expulsion of the Capuchin preachers from France. Since the expulsion of the Jesuits from Paris, the Capuchins have been the mainstay of Catholicism in the kingdom ; if they are expelled, it will spell ruin to the Church.[38] In the end Ange de Joyeuse remained in Paris and became a popular preacher there ; the king himself at times being present at his sermons. But Jean-Baptiste, in spite of the repugnance of his Provincial,

[38] Archives du Vatican, Nunziatura di Francia, XLVII, 138. cf. *Histoire des Capucins*, op. cit., II, p. 172.

Honoré de Champigny,[39] to let him go, left France and was affiliated to the Capuchin province of Venice. Shortly afterwards he was sent as a chaplain with the Papal army in the war against the Turks and gave his life in attending to the sick and dying. It was a noble ending of a career that never lacked courage.[40]

Meanwhile, whilst these events were taking place, the Capuchins were already beginning a new phase in their activity for the spiritual renovation of France.

[39] Père Honoré had been absent from France during the earlier phase of this affair.

[40] See the account *Vie et mort du Rev. Père Jean-Bapt. Brulart* in *Chronologie Historique*, MS. *cit.*, fol. 91, *seq.*

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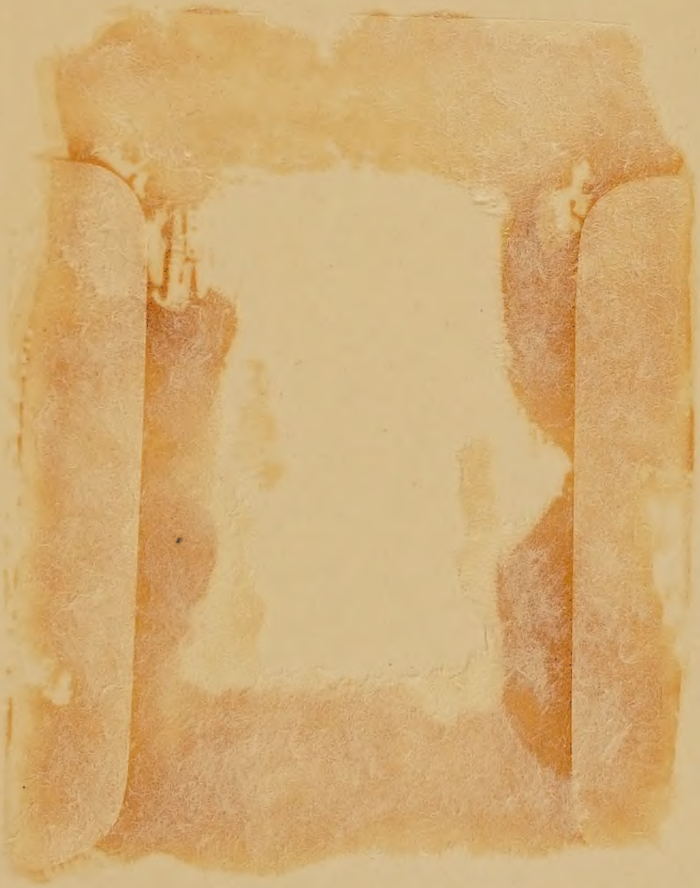

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